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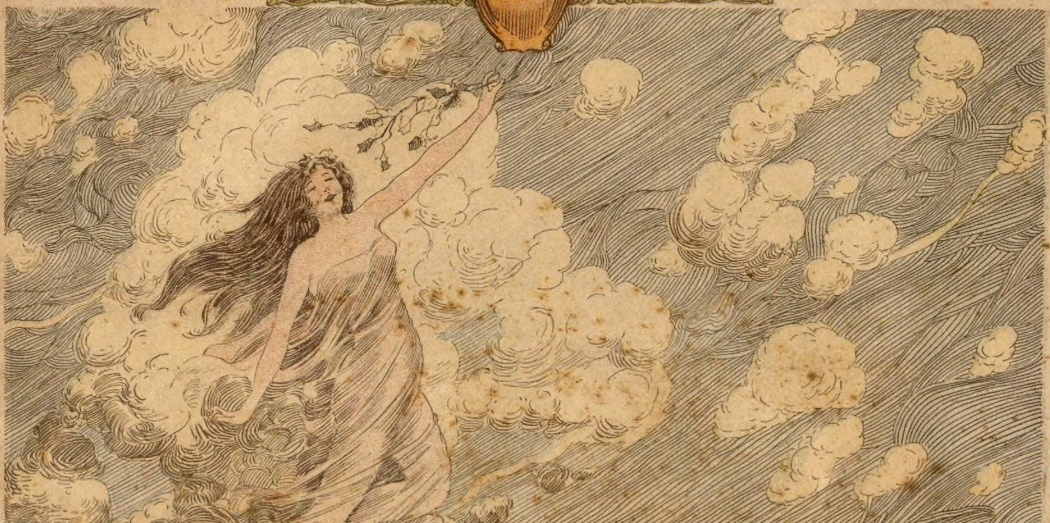
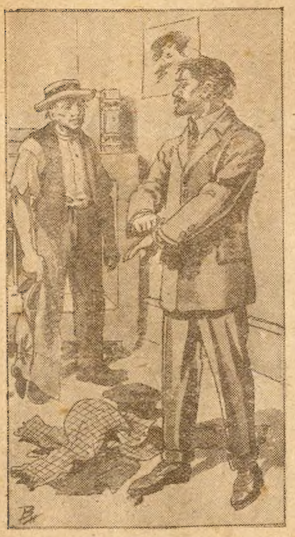


MARCH *is a boisterous maiden*
And, undeterred by fear,
With many pranks proclaims herself
The tomboy of the year

DONATIONS TO THE HEATHEN

By EDGAR WHITE



"I never felt so swell!"

IN ALL my goin' to and fro, Reddy, old pal, I never felt quite so swell."

"For a hand-me-down layout it is becoming to your style of beauty, Blink. Can you see through them glims?"

"Miles and miles—when I turn 'em to the moon. And say, Red, for a skinny duck like you that alpacker coat you got on ain't so bad. I'd dish that red necktie though—try something in black and white. It's more genteel. Here's a whole show-case full marked down from 50 cents to 49½.

The talk was between a couple of gentlemen who were doing their trading at the general merchandise store in Drowsyville between midnight and cockcrow. Not wishing to disturb the proprietor or any of his clerks while they were enjoying that portion of their sleep so essential to manly vigor, the customers had entered the store by removing a wooden shutter in a skillful manner, and were making their own selections. As there was no night policeman in Drowsyville, and as it was the rule among all good citizens to turn in shortly after curfew, Messrs Blinkey and Reddy had an uninterrupted opportunity to transact their business, and were going about it in a leisurely way, as became connoisseurs. For a village, the store seemed to be fairly well stocked, and the two traders could not refain from expressing their admiration of the perfect fits they had been able to find in shoes, clothing, hats, and so forth. The only pang of regret that came to them was that, with such an extensive assortment at hand, circumstances would force them to leave the greater part of it behind.

The try-outs were made in the rear room of the store, where, with shutters closed and no way for the rays to get out, they used an oil lamp to see what they were getting. In this room, which was a sort of office, was a safe of such ancient type that the long, slender tools with which the two visitors had thoughtfully provided themselves easily enabled them to work the old lock back and expose the contents of the alleged strong box.

"Only five bucks and ninety-five cents," criticised Blinkey. "Business wasn't rushing today."

"Maybe there was a ice-cream soshable in town, and the boss went to it," apologized Reddy.

Their selections made, the two citizens of the night threw their old duds over behind a counter, blew out the light, and passed out the way they came, careful to replace the ineffective shutter as they found it. Instead of taking the railroad track, Blinkey and his pal hit the cross-country highway, which they followed for several miles, and as day broke they reached another railroad. Up the track a way was a village, for which they headed. There they got breakfast, and then went down to the depot. By looking at a time table they decided to buy tickets to Marble City, some forty miles down the road. There they would have a choice of railroads in several directions, and the distance was not so far as to wipe out their cash reserve. As they had a little time to wait the travelers invested 25 cents each in a shave and shoe-polish. It was done in a spirit of reckless extravagance, without any thought of its value as a disguise.

"It's this way, Reddy," philosophized Blinkey, who was the older man, "you don't get anything out of this old world 'cept what you eat and has on. I've been all over it, and I know. The Arabs and Chinks and Japs and Hottentots and white-folks is all fightin' and scrougin' and tearin' each other for them two things. I seen 'em and I know. So let's get ours while we're gettin'."

When the train came Blinkey led the way into the chair car and Reddy followed. As the journey proceeded each station furnished quite a quota of men, well-dressed, kindly talking, and of good deportment. Soon the car was full. Blinkey and Reddy gave their seats to some ladies and went into the smoking compartment, but did not smoke. They had plenty of materials, recently acquired, in their pockets, but did not think it wise to produce them before others just at that time.

At Marble City the greater part of the passengers got off. Several men with blue badges were greeting the arrivals, shaking hands and pinning badges on them. Before Blinkey and Reddy had a chance to slink away, a man with beaming face and extended hand came toward them and briskly welcomed them:

"Glad to see you, brethren. Hold a minute till I pin these badges on you; that will insure your accommodation. Just follow the crowd and you'll find the place."

Before the two pals could say anything, the genial host was making the same speech and pinning like insignia on the other arrivals.

"What'll we do, Blink?" asked Reddy.

"Play the game," answered the more resourceful partner; "come along."

They mixed in with the crowd that had come in on the train. Nobody looked at them with any suspicion. On the contrary, two or three, in passing, shook hands with them, and called them "brethren." Soon a large stone church appeared on a corner, and the delegates were entering it by way of the spacious stone steps in front. Reddy started to back off.

"Come on, you geezer," growled "Brother" Blinkey; "here's where we make a killin'."

Over to one side a pretty young woman was busy registering the names of all the delegates in a large book. Blinkey took a tight hold of his partner's arm and boldly marched up.

"Name, please?" inquired the recording angel, with a pleasant smile.

"B. Linkey—er—Smith," responded the older man.

"Do you spell that last name with an i or a y?" asked the girl.

"Some spells it with a i and some spells it with a y," replied the cosmopolitan citizen, "but I like the y best—don't you?"

"It's more distinguished," laughed the young woman. "So I'll spell it S-m-y-t-h-e."

"Good."

"Next," to Reddy. What's your name, please?"

It was on the tip of Reddy's tongue to make the same defiant reply he had so often used to country officers, but a tightened grip on his arm saved him in time.

"R. Eddy—er—Jones," he meekly replied.

"Do you spell the last syllable of your middle name dy or die?" the recorder wanted to know.

"The which?" gasped Reddy.

"Spell it E-d-d-y, if you please, ma'am," requested Blinkey.

She smiled brightly, and the two men passed on to the front. Many of the delegates to the convention were strangers to one another, and at this stage of the meeting it was not noticed that nobody there was unacquainted with the wolves that had strayed among the sheep.

Presently the chairman took his place before the desk and called the meeting to order. Blinkey pulled his red-headed pal over to an unobtrusive pew at one side. After some preliminary remarks the chairman directed the secretary to call the roll of counties to see how many were represented. It was a district convention of the missionary branch of the church. Most of the counties were represented, but the secretary reported there were no delegates from Tidewell, Hampton, and Adair counties. A brother leaned across the seat and whispered to Blinkey:

"Beg pardon, brother, but aren't you two gentlemen from Tidewell?"

In his career along the lighted way Blinkey had been in places where the right sort of an answer fired off without a second's hesitation had saved his life. So he knew what to do.

"Yes, brother," he replied, "but I didn't hear them call our county."

The brother behind instantly arose and addressed the chair:

"Mr. President, through a misunderstanding of the call two brethern from Tidewell County did not report. They are here, sitting in front of me."

"Very well," returned the president; "their chairman will please walk forward and give the names of his delegation to the secretary."

Blinkey promptly did as directed, so the secretary's record showed B. Linkey Smythe and R. Eddy Jones as delegates to the district missionary convention from Tidewell County.

The morning session passed without incident. As the delegates were leaving, a member of the local committee stopped Blinkey and Reddy. Reddy true to his habit, would have run, if Blinkey had not held grimly to him.

"Have you gentlemen had homes assigned you?" asked the committeeman.

Blinkey replied they had not; they supposed there being such a crowd, all the houses would be full, and they were thinking of going to the hotel.

"Not at all; not at all, brother!" exclaimed the committeeman. "Don't you remember it was the condition of Marble City getting the convention that all the delegates should be entertained free? We have homes for all. Here—Miss Nellie; I wish you would take these brethren 'round to your mother's house; she said she could handle four or five."

Miss Nellie said she would be pleased to do so. On the way she chatted enthusiastically about the big meeting they were going to have and some of its features. Blinkey did the talking for the Tidewell County delegation, using a few well-chosen expressions and being careful not to overdo the thing. At Nellie's home they met her mother in the parlor. The good woman was a bit troubled, and Blinkey promptly suggested if her house were full they could go elsewhere.

"If you two gentlemen wouldn't mind occupying the same bed," the lady suggested. "I hate to ask it of you, but——"

Behind his dark and grave face Mr. B. Linkey Smythe smiled gently to himself at the thought of inconvenience to himself and Reddy in sleeping together. During the last six months they had been bed-fellows in box cars, strawstacks, switch-shanties, schoolhouses—at every conceivable place where wanderers, without the price of a bed, find a night's lodging.

"We'll make out all right in the same bed, and thank you very much, ma'am," replied Blinkey, not overdoing the thing, and the cloud passed from the good woman's brow.

One of normal tendencies would think three good meals a day, a soft bed to sleep in at night, and nice people to be with through the day would be an ideal situation, but the junior delegate from Tidewell County was not at all satisfied. He had no chance to smoke, nobody had offered him a drink of anything but water, and his restless spirit revolted at sitting six or eight hours every day in a seat while a whole lot of people talked about the heathen and things he couldn't understand.

"Just keep your shirt on a day or two, Reddy," soothed Blinkey, "and things will come our way. We'll get something out of this, and then we'll go into the big city and have the time of our lives."

"Well," growled Reddy, "I ain't seen nothing 'less we lift the landlady's tableware, and it's plated."

"Reddy, if you touch a thing in that house I'll wring your neck!" declared Blinkey, savagely.

Reddy knew when Blinkey was in earnest. Once he had seen him in a fight with a gang of gypsies, and he went through them like a whirlwind, leaving five of them bruised and battered on the ground. And it was over a matter which, to Reddy's way of looking at it, didn't amount to a row of pins. The gypsies had simply lied to Blinkey about conditions in a certain town, and when that desperate gentleman had learned the truth he traveled five miles to reach the nomad's camp and teach them a wholesome lesson in veracity. So Reddy never pursued a subject too far when he observed that curious green light in Blinkey's somewhat defective optics.

The convention meandered along for three days without anything in particular happening. Some noticed, however, as a matter a bit unusual, that the delegates from Tidewell never had anything to say. Most all the other delegates were on their feet talking every time they had a chance, but nothing ever came from Tidewell. Blinkey was watching matters like a hawk, but he was too sagacious to break in unless he knew something about the subject. But finally his chance came. The afternoon of the third day a young woman arrived, and was announced as a volunteer for the Chinese mission field. This was received with applause, and the young woman was called for. With much timidity she went forward, and told why she had decided to take up that perilous work in a far-off land. It appeared she had never studied conditions in China—knew nothing whatever of the country, or the sort of people she was going among. Yet she was ready and willing to make the sacrifice, and hoped that her efforts would be crowned with success. The young woman was again applauded, and left the platform with two red spots on her otherwise pale cheeks.

"I wish we had a little more definite knowledge about that strange land," observed the president. "Our missionaries should not be sent there until they have some practical working idea of the situation. I don't suppose there is anybody here who could tell us something from actual experience over there."

"Mr. President!"

At a voice from the unexpected quarter of Tidewell County every delegate turned with quick interest. Blinkey's tall form loomed up like an apparition. He held out his hand in an impressive manner.

"I'm not an educated man," announced the senior from Tidewell, "but you've asked a question on which I may throw some light, and if you'll overlook some of my bad grammar and so on, I'll tell you what I know about China and the Chinks. I lived there some years, and in that time I dressed as a Chinaman, talked Chinese, and did pretty much what the Chinamen do."

Mr. B. Linkey Smythe did not mention the calling he pursued while giving his very terse but graphic account of Mongolian character. Probably he thought it was immaterial. But he succeeded so well, in a ten minutes' talk, in interesting the delegates, that when the session drew to a close that afternoon, the man who was to speak that night got up and offered to waive his address if the gentleman from Tidewell County would consent to talk to the convention on China. This was presented in the form of unanimous request by the convention, and as the cheering subsided, Blinkey arose and bowed in submission to the voice of the convention.

"Say, pard," Reddy cheerfully remarked to his companion, as they left the church that afternoon, "do you know I think youse gettin' nutty?"

"I'm ashamed of you, Red!" returned Blinkey, reproachfully. "To get jealous over your old pal so close to the good thing we're going to pull off."

"Yes, I heard you say so before, and we ain't got the price of a drink in our pockets. And, say, Blink!"

"Speak, Red."

"These ducks are gettin' almost ready to take up a collection for the heathen they been talking about all week. Every mother's son will ante up, but when the hat comes 'round to us, what the blazes will we do?"

"Chip in."

That night, inspired by the success of his effort in the afternoon, Mr. B. Linkey Smythe took the platform and described China as he had seen it. The big audience went with him through the dangers of smuggling, the horrors of famine, the cruelty to children, the strange beliefs in soul changes; saw the idols, the bleak frontiers where merciless barbarians rode, the injustice and oppression in office, the fearful struggle of the most populous country on earth in its travail from despotism to republicanism.

Blinkey was no orator. He simply told what he saw and told it so the picture lived. For two hours the audience sat entranced at his description, the like of which the delegates had never heard or read. They never dreamed this man had been a smuggler, a dealer in opium, a pirate, and a brigand. They didn't know a price was on his head. To them he was a man who was telling them some mighty important truths, and what he said was directly in line with the purpose of the meeting. So strong was the

(Continued on page twenty-six.)

TO LEDGER READERS

Be sure and read "A MINE MYSTERY," in this issue, and "DONATIONS TO THE HEATHEN." The latter is a mighty good piece of humor. Look out for "one grand old scrap" in the concluding chapters of "A MINE MYSTERY," next week. Also, next week the Ledger will begin one of the strangest stories ever you read, called, "THE SPIDER CONQUEST; or, GURLOCK'S WIZARD WORK," and a capital new boy's story, "BOB BRIGHT'S ADVENTURES; or, HUNTING THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY." Read them sure. A splendid railroad story will follow, called, "AN ENGINEER'S NERVE; or, BURT CORBIN'S TEST," and a strange occult story, entitled, "THE PRINCESS ZITHENA; or, THE CALL OF THE SOUL." The Ledger is making good its claim of being the best story paper in America. Take it and read it and see if you are not convinced.

A MINE MYSTERY

By WILDER ANTHONY

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CHAPTER I.

HIRAM VAN ORTH, banker capitalist, looked at Dick Harland's shoes. They cost not a penny less that fifteen dollars. He looked at Harland's jaw and noted with a sort of relief that it was the kind of jaw which would force its way two inches over the line for a first touchdown. Then he caught sight of the young man's highly manicured finger-nail's and his eyes hurriedly traveled back to the jaw.

"I want you to go to Wyoming, if you can manage to break away long enough from your confounded social game," said Van Orth, abruptly, and added, "Know anything about the West?"

Harland nodded.

"Tough place," the banker responded, picking up his shell-rimmed glasses from the top of his morning's mail, which lay untouched on the broad mahogany desk.

"I was born there—Colorado," Harland observed quietly.

Van Orth regarded him steadily for a few seconds, then started, as though he had made a sudden discovery.

"Knew a sheriff once—Cripple Creek country—had an eye like yours; they said he wasn't afraid of anything in Heaven or on earth; name was—let me see—name was Fowler."

A curious smile swept over Harland's face. "I guess you've got him right," he said; "he was my uncle—mother's brother; taught me to ride and shoot when I was a kid."

"Humph!" Van Orth settled his glasses on his nose and reached for a clip of typewritten papers. "I want you to go to Elkhorn," he continued, in his short, barky banner. "That Squaw Lode property is in a devil of a mess."

Harland nodded. He was beginning to catch the drift of his employer's remarks. The Squaw Lode was an exceedingly rich gold mine which some comparatively recent stock market manipulations had placed under the banker's control.

"Yes," he assented quietly, "I should like to go. What do you want me to do?"

"I'm coming to that. For several months the mine's output has been falling off; decreasing steadily, in spite of the fact that we are working a very rich vein. We're being robbed, although no one knows how, or by whom. I have here," he tapped the papers with his forefinger, "records which prove that we are losing about a thousand dollars in bullion every month. The stockholders are howling, and the men now in active charge of the mine are at their wits' end. Robinson, the superintendent, has resigned—he's an old man and not up to a thing of this sort—and the plant is in charge of his assistant. You're a mining engineer, and this is your chance. I'm going to give you full control and all the help you need to ferret out the leakage. I've no suggestions to make. Results count, and that's what I want. This thievery must stop. I'll help all I can; but you'll be too far away to fall back on me. It's up to you, Dick."

He paused and fussed with the papers on his desk, while Harland rapidly considered the situation. The idea that there was hard, dangerous work ahead of him appealed to him strongly; he loved excitement for its own ake; and he inwardly rejoiced at the opportunity to exchange his humdrum position in the bank for that of a man who does things. Ever since his graduation from Harvard, two years before, he had longed for the chance to practice his profession, although his slender purse had forced him to stifle his ambition under the daily grind of office routine. Now that it had come the opportunity did not find him lagging.

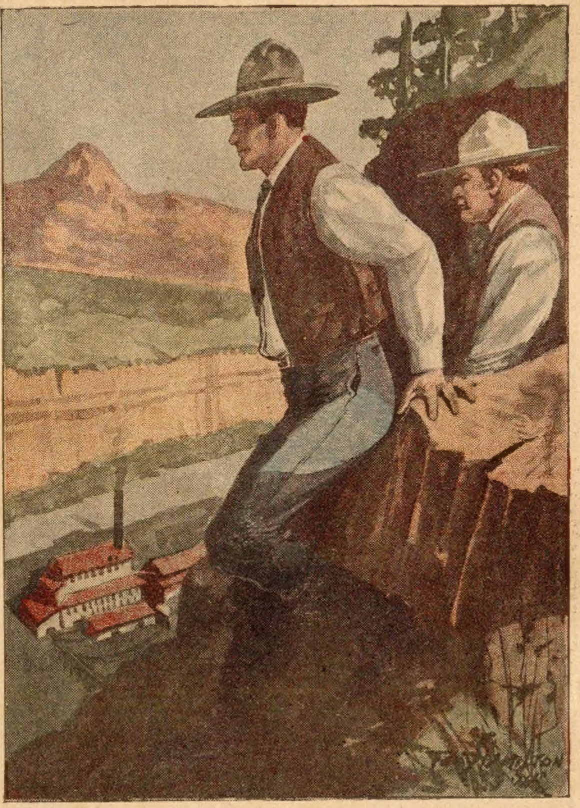
"When do I start?" he asked.

"Immediately. There is a train for Chicago at two this afternoon. Short notice; but the case is urgent. You'll find a through ticket and expense money in this envelope."

"All right. Thank you, sir." Harland rose to his feet and pocketed the envelope. "I'll do my best out there; but there's no time to waste now. It's lucky I'm not a family man. Good-by, sir."

"Good-by and good luck!" Mr. Van Orth responded heartily. "You'll succeed, my boy, I'm sure of it. Marble—the man now in charge at the Squaw—will give you all the details."

After bidding a hasty farewell to his friends at the bank, Harland hurried to his rooms and packed a small steamer trunk with such clothing and other effects as he needed. He was without ties of any kind, and it did not take long for him to arrange his business affairs satisfactorily. His social engagements he could cancel by letter later on. Already—albeit for months he had been one of the most popular and enthusiastic of the younger set—he was forgetting his dances and parties in a dream of the land he loved. Scenes of his boyhood on his father's ranch came back to him, and he whistled merrily as he hurried his preparations. The West was calling to him as it had never called before. Already he could see the hazy peaks of the mountains and sniff the wine-like tang of the prairie wind.



"I'll swear that bullion wasn't tampered with!"

CHAPTER II.

TWO-THIRDS of Elkhorn's population turned out to greet Harland. A similar compliment was paid to any possible arrival on any possible train. The little town, which, though fifty miles distant, was the nearest railroad point to Squaw Lode, looked like a blot on a forbidding landscape; but beyond it were the mountains, towering in a majesty that had no heed of petty things. One saw them and forgot the crowd of staring cattle men and miners, the unlovely buildings, the blistering heat, the fine, powdery yellow dust that was six inches thick on the main street, and the air that tasted as if it had been baked. Two-thirds of the population looked over Harland and Harland looked over two-thirds of the population. Neither of them said what they thought.

Harland had almost reached the end of the scorching platform when he was accosted by a tall, smooth-shaven man of uncertain age, clad in blue jeans and a faded slouch hat, who detached himself from the crowd and stepped forward.

"Name of Harland?" this individual listlessly inquired. "I'm Marble. I was expecting you." He lazily extended a lean, brown hand, which the other grasped cordially.

"Glad to meet you," Harland said. "You got my wire then?"

"Yes;" drawled Marble, stifling a yawn—he seemed more than half asleep—"and I thought I'd drive in for you myself so we could get acquainted. Let's go over to the hotel. It's a beastly hole; but anything is preferable to this." He indicated with a wave of his hand the gaping crowd and the hot, evil-smelling station. "It's devilish warm," he added, as if by an afterthought.

"It is that; but you should have been on the train. Phew! It's cool here by contrast."

On his way across the street Harland covertly studied his companion. He saw a man over six feet tall and with the striking physique of a prize-fighter; his light summer clothing scarcely concealed the quiet play of his immense, knotty muscles. His eyes were a pale, faded blue, expressionless as china disks set in a mahogany face. Somehow, Marble's languid pose gave one the impression that he was always tired; an impression which was enhanced by a general slouchiness of figure. His was not altogether a prepossessing personality at first glance, although Harland soon discovered that his laziness was more studied than real. When it so pleased him John Marble could be both industrious and active.

After they gained the comparative coolness of the dingy little hotel and, upon Marble's invitation, adjourned to the bar, the assistant broached the subject uppermost in Harland's mind.

"There's no use trying to get to the mine tonight," he said. "It's forty odd miles over bad roads—a full day's journey at the best. We'd better start early in the morning."

Accordingly, soon after dawn the next day, they set forth in a stout, though light, mountain wagon drawn by a pair of wiry, half-broken horses. The road wound along the bank of Crawling Water River and was rough and very hilly; in spots, owing to a recent freshet, it was almost impassable; or would have been, at least, to anything less agile than the sure-footed little buckskins.

"I suppose you've been told all about our recent losses?" Marble drawled inquiringly, after they had traveled several miles.

"I—yes." Harland came to himself with a start. For a space he had been sunk in a silent contemplation of the glorious panorama which was unfolding itself before him, and the assistant's words came as a distinct shock. "What is your theory as to them?" he asked, after a moment.

"None worth talking about. Like everyone else, I'm sure the bullion is tampered with after it leaves our control, but it beats me to see how or when. It's a darned curious thing."

"It is, indeed," Harland concurred. "At least, so much as I know of it. Why are you so sure the thefts have been committed after the gold left the mine?"

"Because they simply couldn't take place before," answered Marble. "You see, it's this way. We're working a one-level shaft driven straight into the base of Squaw Mountain; we load the ore into cars and pull it to the smelting-house, which is only a short distance from the shaft entrance. Then, after the gold has been separated from the dross, it's made into ingots and stacked up in the vault until shipping time. The consignments are hauled by wagon to Elkhorn, where we turn them over to the Wells Fargo people.

"Since the losses began, if not before, we've taken every possible precaution. The vault is cut out of solid rock, and it has only one entrance which opens into the smelting-house. The door is made of chilled steel four inches thick, and is fitted with two patent locks and a combination. Until Robinson—he was super, you know—resigned, the two keys were distributed as follows: Vining, our smelter boss, had one; I had the other, and Robinson alone knew the combination. Now, as acting chief, I have the combination as well as the key. The point is, however, that one one could enter the vault alone; and nothing short of nitroglycerin would force that door. It's needless to add that the door's never been forced; if any one has entered the vault he has done so in such a manner that the means can't be detected, and that's impossible."

He paused, and for a few moments Harland gazed thoughtfully at the sluggish, mud-colored stream beside which they were traveling.

"It looks as if you were right," he commented, at length. "The robberies must have been perpetrated somewhere between Elkhorn and Denver. Still, that's hardly conceivable—the express companies are very strict and very careful these days. You are sure the bullion has always been intact when it left the mine?"

"Absolutely. We weigh it and pack it in chests the day before it leaves, so as to get an early start. It takes a full day, you see, to reach Elkhorn; and for obvious reasons we never cared to have the stuff on the road after dark."

"As I understand it," Harland continued, "there is another very curious feature. The bullion is apparently all right when it arrives at the mint, isn't it? The loss can't be detected until it's weighed. How do you account for that?"

"Acid," said Marble curtly. "In some unknown way the ingots are subjected to an acid bath which removes a small part of each one. At least, that's Vining's idea, and I think he's right."

"Possibly. I've read of such things, although I never saw it done. What do the mint officials say about it?"

"Nothing important. In fact, I think they believe the whole fault lies in our weighing department; but they're wrong. Our scales are accurate to a hair."

"Humph!" Harland exclaimed, and fell forthwith into a meditative silence from which his companion made no effort to arouse him, and for the rest of their drive the two did very little talking.

It was almost dusk when they reached the mouth of Squaw Canyon and turned into the draw that led up to the mine. The road had been uphill most of the way, and the little buckskins, wiry and tireless as they had seemed in the morning, drooped visibly when they came to a halt in front of the spacious log house which was to be Harland's future headquarters.

This house was located at the upper end of a V-shaped cleft in the mountains at the foot of which lay Squaw Lode mine. At the lower side of the cleft the men's quarters were strung out, while midway between stood the kitchen and eating-house. The smelting-house, a building which, unlike any of the others, was constructed of stone and corrugated iron, had been erected against the very side of the mountain. A few hundred feet above it the entrance to the mine yawned like a huge, black mouth in the rocky bank.

That evening, after a hearty supper, Harland had a talk with Marble and Vining. "We've got to stop this stealing at once," he declared. "Some one is guilty, and I mean to find out who."

"Yes;" said Vining, a colorless little man with a bald head encircled by hair so that it looked much like an alkali spot in an alfalfa patch, "but how? We've all been trying to get at the bottom of the thing for eight months nearly. It's a pretty hard proposition."

"Perhaps," drawled Marble, with his slow, cynical smile, "men are right when they say the place is hoodooed? A ghost might float through the side of the vault, solid as it appears to us."

"Nonsense!" snapped Vining. "You know better, Jack. The men are ignorant and superstitious and willing to believe anything they hear. They get excited whenever they can't understand anything; but we know better."

"There is something then?" Harland asked, in mild surprise.

"So they say," vouchsafed the assistant, "but I doubt it. One of the 'muckers' reports seeing a strange light in the old shaft not long ago. It's all rot, of course."

"Probably," was Harland's comment. "We've real men to deal with in this business—not spooks. Still, the thing might stand investigation. Beginning tomorrow night I shall place an armed guard over the strongroom. Maybe that will help."

"Robinson tried guards and all that," said Vining, "but it did no good. The directors deviled him until he tried everything he could think of; and finally, because they hinted that he had a finger in the pie himself, he got sore and quit. He had a hard time of it, did Robinson."

"Indeed," Harland remarked, "that's interesting. I hadn't heard that he was actually suspected of being mixed up in the thing himself."

"He wasn't," said Marble. "Not exactly, at any rate. For my part, I don't think the old man had nerve enough to turn crooked."

CHAPTER III.

NEXT morning, when Harland went through the mine on a tour of inspection, he was conscious of an indefinable pulse in the atmosphere. He sensed rather than saw that the eyes of every employe, from car boys to high-waged drillers, were fixed upon him in deep and curious interest. And the quality of this interest, as he felt it, was strangely composite. In it there was respect, but mingled with misgivings; a respect tempered with doubt; a dubious shake of the head, as if the chances were in favor of his proving incapable. He was young, without practical experience, and the miners knew it; many of them felt that a wiser, older head should have been chosen to fill Robinson's position.

Harland understood this in a measure, but he permitted no indication of it to appear in his face. He nodded a cheerful good morning to them all, and talked for a few moments to each of the several foremen, tanned, weatherbeaten, steady-eyed bosses, silent for the most part, not at all certain of how to take the new "super," and speaking as little as circumstances would permit. Used as they were to handling the tough, hard-bitten laborers of their shifts, men of half a dozen different nationalities, many of whom could understand little English, they had acquired the habit of growling out their orders in curt monosyllables, and of enforcing them, when necessary, with a pick handle.

Not until he reached the barn, a large, rambling structure of logs, did the new superintendent begin to feel thoroughly at home. Here, much to his surprise, and in the person of the "stable boss," he met an old friend. Marble, who accompanied him on his rounds, had lagged behind to give an order, so that he approached the barn alone. He had reached the wide, open doorway and was stepping through it when he was greeted by a great bellow of joy; the next instant his hand was seized in a grip which threatened to crush it to a pulp. Somewhat startled by this boisterous reception, Harland looked up into the face of the big man who confronted him.

"Bill Dallas!" he gasped in astonishment.

"That's me," the stable boss grinned hugely, "an' mighty glad to see you, Dick. Who'da thought I'd run acrost you this-a-way?" He heartily shook the other's hand, while his booming voice filled the entire barn.

Harland returned the grip in kind. He was genuinely pleased to meet the ex-cowboy, who had been at one time the foreman of his father's ranch and the hero of his boyhood. He had often heard his father say a "whiter," squarer fellow than Bill Dallas never lived; he was a friend in ten thousand; a man to tie to.

Dallas chuckled approvingly. "I'da knowed you anywheres," he said, "although it's been ten years since I saw you. You're just like your dad, Dick, an' you got his grip." He looked ruefully at his huge fingers. "I always said that Tom Harland was the biggest little man I ever met up with."

"You haven't changed much either, Bill," Harland returned, eying the other critically. "It's sure good to see you. How do you happen to be here?"

"I landed here 'bout three months back an' got the job o' runnin' this barn," replied Dallas, leaning against the door frame and commencing to roll a cigarette. "You are the new boss, I expect?"

Harland nodded. The sight of his old friend brought back many tender recollections of the days he had thought gone forever. For a moment, as the foreman rolled his smoke, he lost himself in thought.

Bill Dallas was stalwart and massive of figure, with a seamed and wrinkled face, and small, twinkling gray eyes surrounded by a network of tiny crow's-feet; before his fifty years had partially silvered his hair it had been yellow as that of any old-time Viking. He was strong in his likes and dislikes, he used strong language, he was quick to anger and quick to forgive, he feared no man on earth, and it was said of him that he did not know his own strength.

"I'm sure glad to see you," he remarked, as he scratched a match, "an' to find that the eefeet East ain't spoiled you none. I was a little afeered that city ways would ruin you for the man's place in the world that your father held in his day; but I mighta knowed better. You're a Harland."

Dick laughed. He was accustomed to this free speech—it sounded like old times, and he liked it. He knew that the words were well meant.

"An' they've made you super here," Dallas continued, "made you super right when they need a live man on the job. I s'pose you're elected to stop this monkey work?"

Harland assented.

"Well," the big man commented, "they mighta done a d——sight worse. Sometimes even these big corporations can show signs o' near-human intelleck. You can do it, Dick; an' if you need help you know where to locate the doctor. Your dad done me a good many favors once, an' I ain't the kind that forgets easy. You can come to me like I was your father, boy. I'll go every bit as far with you as I would with him, an' that's plumb into the middle o' h—l."

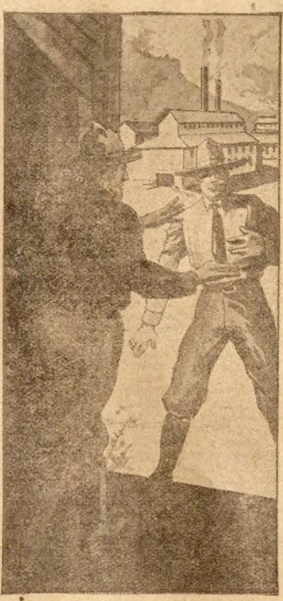
There was more in the statement than Dallas's only half-serious delivery of it implied, and Harland, knowing this, seized his huge hand and shook it, an action which caused the ex-cowboy to grow red in the face.

"Here, here!" he growled. "Don't be a blame young fool. We shook hands just a little bit ago." Then, as he saw Marble coming up, he stepped back and began to bawl orders to one of his men.

CHAPTER IV.

THE day for shipping the bullion came and Harland took personal charge of the body of armed men who accompanied it to Elkhorn. The ingots had been carefully weighed and boxed the day before, and when he saw them safely delivered into the custody of the express agent he drew a long breath of relief. There had not been a hitch of any kind, and he felt sure that for once, at least, the gold was intact. Consequently, he was thunderstruck when the mint officials wired him that the consignment had shrunk considerably by the time it reached them and was reweighed.

"It beats me!" Harland declared, when, visibly worried, he discussed the matter with Marble. "You know that we safeguarded the stuff in every possible way. Nobody entered the vault, and I'll swear that bullion wasn't tampered with between here and Elkhorn. It certainly looks as if the loss occurred on the train, despite the fact that Pinkerton men had charge of the shipment all the way through. We're twelve hundred dollars short, and Heaven only knows where it's gone to!"



"Bill Dallas!" he gasped.

"It's curious, all right," agreed the assistant, with a peculiar smile. "Mighty curious, and this isn't the first time I've said that either. The thing is impossible, but it happens."

"Yes," Harland admitted, "it does. The thing for us to do is to find out how. To begin with, the ingots are put through some sort of process which removes an almost imperceptible portion of each one—we're agreed on that point. It must be so, because they always tally up all right, although the weight is not there. Now, such a thing is possible; but it's bound to take time. Those heavy bars couldn't be washed in acid—or whatever is done to them—in a minute, Marble. It would take hours. I'm willing to confess that it beats me."

He meant it. He was baffled. That day, alone in the office, he thought long and hard, and the more he thought the more puzzled he became. The mine was being systematically robbed, so much was plain enough; how, when, and by whom was the problem. Strive as he would the superintendent could not unearth a single clew.

This was not all that worried him. For days a new doubt had been tormenting his brain. He distrusted Marble. The assistant was an enigma. Languid, slow, almost lazy, as he appeared, he was withal an industrious worker. The men all liked him; he performed his various duties well; except for his cynical mannerisms and the impression he gave of watching one covertly, there was no real fault to find with the man. Still, Harland could not bring himself to like him—there was a discordant note somewhere. Marble's sinuous, slow-moving figure carried a suggestion of hidden strength which reminded one of a caged tiger. The man's muscular development was prodigious, but always half-concealed, like the ripple and play of powerful muscles beneath soft fur; even his sleepy, sneering smile had a hint of the feline. Although there was nothing tangible against him, he did not improve on acquaintance.

One night Harland awoke in the small hours with the feeling that all was not as it should be, even though he could not tell what had roused him. There was no sound but the ticking of his watch where it lay on the table and the chirping of the crickets outside in the grass. They were wholesome, commonplace sounds, but there was a certain weirdness about them as there always is in the most insignificant noise during the night time. Although he was neither nervous nor timid, his instincts seemed to whisper that all was not right. For several minutes he lay on his back staring at the ceiling, motionless and listening, without hearing a thing out of the ordinary; then he sat up and looked out the window.

There was a faint moon and the sky was dusted with a maze of stars. A faint breeze gently swayed the dark treetops. As he sat on the edge of the bed, rubbing the knees of his pajamas with the palms of his hands and looking about, Harland could see the smelting-house and the little annex that Vining used as a sleepingroom. Except for the chorus of crickets there was no sign of life, and he was in the act of crawling under the covers again, when a shadow detached itself from the smelting-house and moved into the yard.

Deeply interested, the watcher peered intently, while the first shadow was joined by a second shorter one. After a short halt the two turned and disappeared within the mouth of an abandoned ore-shaft, which opened a little way beyond the building. Wide awake now, Harland hastily pulled on his trousers and shoes and crept out of the house. Hugging the shadows, he slipped across the yard, and paused in the gloom which enveloped the entrance to the shaft. For an instant he hestitated, half resolved to arouse the guards who were watching the vault; then, deciding that this was unnecessary, he entered the shaft and silently made his way toward a dim light which flickered deep inside the mountain.

He had gone about halfway, and was beginning to catch the hum of low-pitched voices, when he was brought up short and quivering by a terrible shriek. It was the cry of a man in agony, and, badly startled, Harland remained glued in his tracks for a few seconds. Then, as the echoes rumbled and boomed through the narrow shaft, he uttered a shout and dashed forward. A dozen paces carried him to a bend in the tunnel, and when he turned this he came full upon the tragedy.

Some thirty feet away two men were stooping over the body of a third, evidently examining it by the light of a lantern which one held in his hand. Something familiar in the shape of one of the stooping figures caused the superintendent to stop for an instant; but upon recognizing Marble he ran forward again.

Marble straightened up with a jerk at the sounds of his approach and faced about. For a second he seemed on the point of bolting; then, apparently in response to a whispered word from Vining—who stood a little to one side with the lantern—he recovered himself. In the uncertain light his bronzed features looked almost ghastly.

"Marble!" exclaimed Harland, breathlessly, coming to an abrupt halt in front of the assistant. "Good God, man! What's happened?"

"Nothing—much," answered Marble shortly. "A man's dead; that's all. It's Jarsen. He—we saw him come in here—wondered what he was up to, and followed him. He attacked us. We—I—well, we defended ourselves. It's a bad business."

During this rapid, disjointed explanation, so unlike the assistant's usual drawling manner, Harland recovered something of his self-control. Marble was lying, he sensed that instantly, and the wish that he were armed or that he had called for help before venturing into the shaft flashed through his mind. Just what he suspected he did not rightly know himself in the excitement of the moment, and more to gain time than anything else he stepped closer and looked down at the body. Jarsen had been one of the shift bosses, and he remembered him well. Only the day before he had been obliged to reprimand him severely for insubordination.

The dead man was a horrible sight. His breast and stomach were a mass of dreadful stabs and cuts, and the ground upon which he lay was hideous with clots and splashes of blood. Everything indicated that the man had died hard. Signs of a furious struggle were manifested on all sides, and the expression on his mutilated face was horrible; the lips were parted, showing the teeth, like those of a beast shot in the act of snarling. Harland shuddered as he gazed at it.

Harland was covering the dead face with his handkerchief, when through the corner of his eye he saw Marble step forward. Turning quickly, he was half erect, when the entire roof of the tunnel seemed to fall on his head. Stars gyrated before his eyes; then everything became blank.

This thrilling story will be concluded in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

The Way They Felt.

"If that is the way you feel about it," she said, "we may as well consider our engagement at an end."

"I had no wish to give you pain," he replied, but there was nothing in his manner to indicate that he intended to fall upon his knees and beg her to forgive him.

"You have not given me pain," she coldly declared. "On the contrary, I am glad you are ready to have our affair terminated. I was afraid you might think me heartless when it became necessary for me to tell you that I had been mistaken in supposing that I ever cared for you."

"Why should I think you heartless for telling me that? We are all liable to make mistakes in such matters. The trouble is that too many people fail until it is too late to find out that they have been mistaken."

"I know. I'm so thankful that it has not been so in our case. I shall always have a friendly interest in your career."

"Thank you. I hope my career may not be absolutely uninteresting."

"Then you think you will have a career, just the same?"

"Oh, I shall do my best."

"I'm so glad of that. I should hate to think that I had in any way interfered with your hopes or ambitions."

"Only a weakling would let any girl spoil his future."

"Yes. I feel sure of that. And only a silly girl would let any man deprive her of happiness."

"It is fortunate that our engagement was not announced. As it is, there will be no embarrassment for either of us."

"Will you take me home now, please?"

"Why be in a hurry? It is early. We may as well enjoy this evening together."

"Are you enjoying it?"

"I always enjoy myself when I am with you."

"You don't look as if you were very happy."

"Well, I consider it no more than polite to keep from looking jubilant. You are looking particularly radiant yourself."

"Thank you so much."

"Shall I call for your wraps?"

"If you are anxious to get rid of me."

"You asked me a moment ago to take you home. I told you I was in no hurry."

"Then let us wait a while. It is so nice to sit here listening to the music."

"I wish they'd play something a little more cheerful. That piece makes me feel as if I were at a funeral."

"Will! Why couldn't you have acknowledged before that you were in the wrong? Let's go home now. I want to be alone with you."

* * *

Providence.

As a rule, says the Manchester Guardian, the habitual wrongdoer bears little resentment toward the detective who may have brought him to justice. Neither is he always devoid of a blind belief in the workings of Prividence. One known to the police as a "chronic crook" and expert pickpocket met one of the detectives who had on several occasions had unpleasant business with him.

"How are you doing now, Tom?" asked the detective.

"Doing!" bitterly exclaimed the crook. "You and your pals have fairly bottled our business!"

"Well, how's the wife?" asked the man from Scotland Yard, whereupon the crook nearly broke down.

"The—missis," he said, "died a month ago. It was a near thing that the parish didn't have to bury her, but"—with a ring of heartfelt gratitude in his voice—"Providence was very good, for it sent along a mug in the nick o' time—and I done him for twenty pounds. We was able to bury poor Liz quite decentlike!"

The Biting Sword

Or, For Mademoiselle's Sake -:- By Victor Ardmore

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Begun in No. 9, February 28. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW MYSTERY.

ON THE ground, flanked by food of various kinds, was a richly-made jewel-case and within it was that which gave forth a glitter and sparkle that was new to the woods. Treasure was there, scintillating and rich, objects fit for a lady's boudoir, for the box held diamonds, pearls, and other precious stones, all mounted. I looked with fresh uneasiness gripping at my heart, for it was even then apparent that the perils of our journey were added to greatly.

"Mynheer Winckle told me the packs held nothing of value save food," I muttered blankly.

There was no reply, and, as I afterward knew, all hands were staring at the jewels with emotions like unto mine.

"Still, Mademoiselle," I added, "it is only right, perhaps, that you should take your property with you."

"But," she cried quickly, "they are not mine!"

I shifted my gaze to her face and marked the wonder there.

"Not yours? Whose, then, are they?"

"I know not, Master Stelland, for I never saw or heard of them before. Anne, what do you know?"

"Nothing, mistress. They are strange to me, and I think I have seen as many such delights as any maid in service in New York. I may remind you that I was serving-woman to Frau Winckle while she lived."

"Were these not hers?" I demanded.

"They were not, master."

"I think Mynheer Winckle has daughters."

"Yes, but these are none of their belongings."

"Then whose and what are they? Who saw the packs made up?"

Both Anne and Hugh declared they had nothing to do with that. He had seen them first, when, waiting in Winckle's inclosed grounds, they had been brought to him for strapping on the horse's back. Anne very fitly stated that she had not seen them until light of the present day broke in the east.

"But," I persisted, "who did pack them?"

"I don't know, master," Hugh answered. "Not one word of that came to me, nor did I know there would be a pack until I saw it as I have explained."

Mademoiselle picked up the casket. For the moment she forgot our troubles and the spell was upon her that such gewgaws have for her estimable sex. Her bright eyes had an added sparkle, and her lips were parted as if her soul spoke words her tongue could not repeat. Truly, I liked the looks of her then more than ever, for she was at the feet of a household idol and she was paying beautiful tribute.

I dare wager a half of my fortune against a pewter button there was no sparkle in my own eyes. The confounded baubles cried out their purpose to make trouble as clearly as if they had a thousand tongues. How had they got into the pack?

We took the question up with gravity, but guesses were few and pitifully feeble. It was practically impossible that they could have been bundled up by mistake. A fool would know a jewel-case from a loaf of bread or a cut of venison. That an ordinary thief had acted thus looked equally ridiculous, for who would steal and then send his plunder away by one not a confederate?

Other surmises suffered as severely at the hands of logic, but my life of adventure and acquaintance with intrigue was not to be deprived of its wisdom born of experience.

"There's a dastardly scheme in this matter!" I declared bluntly.

"How so, Master Stelland?" Mademoiselle asked.

"I know not the how, but this casket came in that pack by somebody's deliberate will. Revenge, greed of gain, or something like it was responsible, though how any man would gain anything by harnessing the jewels to us I fail to see."

"'Tis an evil thing we have them!" grumbled Hugh.

"How so, Master Dull Man?" demanded Anne, bridling. "Shall we be denied pretty things when others have them?"

"Shall we be denied the gallows when others have it?" he retorted.

Now, he gave me a shock with the words. He and Anne were mere servants, and I was miscalled an adventurer, so we should have been in bad plight had not the presence of Mademoiselle partly taken the burden from our baser backs. Her testimony might clear the rest, if accusation came, but the word gallows took a hard hold upon my nerves. A plague on those glittering trinkets!

"They are charming," the lady was saying dreamily. "If I am a judge of such things, ten thousand pounds would hardly buy them."

"And we have the burden of them!" I growled morosely.

She looked at me wonderingly, and then, she understood. Her expression became very kind, and she put out a hand eloquently.

"Let the burden be mine," she responded quietly. "If anything is said before we reach New Haven, it shall be stated that I brought them."

"The truth will serve better, madam," I expostulated. "We know nothing about the complication, and the mischief that lies in them may well be shunned. Better the truth, if I may give a decided opinion."

Search of the casket revealed nothing more, for there was no name and no written letter, so we had to let it rest at that. Once I suggested that we hide the thing in a secure place and leave it, but I was overruled by the feminine element of our party. They were as reluctant to part with our unwelcome trophy as if it were a living friend. It was woman's way, but I disliked carrying what I felt was a herald of ill luck.

We had breakfast, and it was not only good, but really beyond wood ways, so we had our fill. Whether this would continue until we reached our destination was not so sure, for our necessary deviation was lengthening our journey not a little.

To obey orders, we were to remain stationary all day and try to avoid being seen by other persons, which meant that we must remain in hiding until night fell. With our camp arranged as well as possible to that end, we settled down to wait, though it was not to my taste.

Given my choice, I would have pressed on as fast as the strength of my charges permitted, and endeavored to get through to New Haven in the shortest possible time. If the foe could see better by day, so could I.

Well do I remember those hours at rest. To hide to advantage we kept close together, and this brought me constantly into the company of Mademoiselle. I did not force conversation, and she was more often silent than engaged in words, but she had somewhat to say and said it well.

A gracious lady she was to all, but, as before, never familiar of speech. Always courteous, she nevertheless had a way that reminded us she was of a rank above us. Why not? All things demanded such a stand on her part, for was she not there with two servants and a man called an adventurer? Doubtless she knew all this, but a kinder mistress was never served by subordinates.

Matters went well with us until after noon, and we saw no human being near or remote. Perhaps this was partly due to the fact that the immediate section was reputed to be haunted, or possibly to the remoteness of it from the main traveled ways.

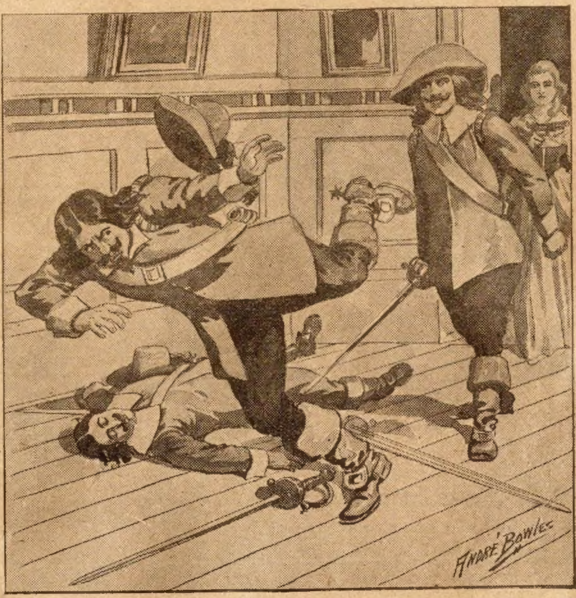
Peace ended there with a change in the weather. We noticed it first when a chill, complaining wind suddenly swept through the grove, and the touch of it brought my head up quickly. The sky had clouded over, and there was a black cast aloft that I did not like. I walked to a more open spot and had a better look, and Hugh soon joined me.

"We shall have rain," I said, in ill humor.

"Ay, master," he agreed, "and no little shower, either."

"What do you foresee?"

"A black-blowing downpour, master."



He took to his heels.

"I wish I could doubt it, but you are right. We shall have cold rain pelting along here, and carried by a half-gale. I like it not."

"Nor I," and he shook his head soberly.

Just then the breeze took on a harder scurry, and bits of branches fell and littered the earth where we stood. Truly, I liked it little, and a new problem was forced upon us. I returned to camp.

"Mademoiselle," I asked, "have you wraps with you?"

"No," she answered. "Only what I have on at this moment."

"Anne," I continued, "are you certain the packs contain nothing of that sort?"

"There is nothing but food, master," the maid returned.

I gnawed my lip irritably. When preparations were made in New York one thing had been forgotten. The possibility of rain had been overlooked, and here we were with a driving downpour as a sure calamity within the next few hours, or, perhaps, in less than one hour.

What was to be done? If we remained where we were Mademoiselle would be drenched in ten minutes after the rain struck. If we sought shelter we should disobey our orders, which were that we should do no traveling except at night.

The cold, the force of the wind, and the blackness of the clouds steadily increased, and at the end of half an hour I said the decisive word to what we had been considering.

"Half a mile onward," I explained, "is the deserted house of one Stephen Crill, a man who, like a few other dwellers hereabouts, was slain by Indians a few years back. 'Tis a ruinous place in a way, though I am certain the roof will keep out the water. We must go there."

"Let it be so," replied Mademoiselle, "and I will take the responsibility for the disobedience of orders."

"I thank you kindly, madam," I said promptly, "but it was I who received the orders, and I must needs bear the blame if any comes. Be that as it may, we cannot remain here to be drenched by a storm that may last for several days."

"Have you never been drenched, Master Stelland?" she asked, looking at me with gracious gravity.

"Often," I admitted.

"Then you will venture disobedience for my sake—is it not that?"

"Madam, we must have shelter."

"Sir," she exclaimed, "I am fortunate in having a protector who is proving himself as solicitous for my comfort as he is reputed brave."

"Say, rather," and I bowed low, "that I am lucky to have chance to use my poor wits for so generous a charge."

With the decision made, we lost little time. The horses were saddled and the packs seen to, and presently we were again in motion, our faces toward Stephen Crill's ruined home.

Expecting little meaning to our new step, since it was almost a certainty that we would see nobody by the way or at the ruin, I gave less thought to that matter than to the main point. I did not like going against orders, but Mademoiselle must not be caught in that rain.

The usual time of nightfall was still two hours distant, but the clouds seemed almost to hang just above our heads, and there was premature darkness in the woods. Imminent as the first drops were, we necessarily made our pace slow, for we had to pick our course between the tree-trunks almost as if it were midnight.

When I caught sight of the structure I turned to Hugh.

"Back of the house is the near end of a ravine that begins abruptly, and then extends east. In that ravine you will find a shanty that is the stable. Get the horses there, after which I must ask you to remain as a guard."

"It shall be so, master," he said readily.

"I will myself bring you food—but we are none too soon. From saddles, and get to cover!"

We leaped to the ground, I caught the pack from Hugh's hand, and then the three of us hastened to the old house. The door was closed, but I shoved it open, and we went in to meet what fate had in store for us. We little knew what it was.

CHAPTER V.

THE SWORD FIGHT.

TOTAL darkness was in the room, but it mattered little to me.

"Remain by the door," I directed, "and I will soon have some sort of light. Unless Crill's belongings have been carried away there may be a candle, and if none is to be come upon, why, we will do with light from the fireplace. That is surely left, and the wood is at our door."

Moving, I half stumbled over a chair.

"Something is still here," I added, "and we may hope for more——"

I paused as a door creaked, and then the room was suddenly relieved of its blackness and we of our solitude. On the threshold of an inner room stood a woman, a candle in her hand.

For a moment it was startling to see a person where I had confidently expected desertion, and the more so because the presence of one of her sex, minus outdoor garments, showed that the old house was tenanted, but as I noted that she was of advanced years and had a gentle face, I rallied to meet the emergency and plucked off my hat.

"Madam," I cried, "pray pardon this intrusion, but we thought the place deserted and were seeking shelter from the storm."

"Sir," was the instant reply, and she smiled as she spoke, "make no apologies. You are very welcome to this poor cover. I am glad you found it in time." She then turned to my companions. "If your ladies will kindly accept what I can offer, they are free to use all."

"But, madam," I persisted, "I thought no one resided here."

"My good man and I have been here three months. He, too, will bid you welcome."

"Can it be that two of you live here alone, so remote?"

"Wholly alone, sir," she said calmly. "We do not fear, though we are old and none too strong."

"May I speak with your husband?"

"Presently, sir, when he returns from seeing to a trap in which we snare the wild creatures for part of our food. Meanwhile, pray sit all."

I was content. If there was evil in the woman her face belied her greatly, and it pleased me to have a better place for Mademoiselle than a deserted ruin. I made answer, and then gave attention to my charges. A brief delay followed as Mademoiselle herself spoke kindly and winningly with the hostess, and I felt that we should make sure conquest of her heart with the gracious lady speaking so well.

Furniture was scarce and the chairs rough and crude, but we were not the persons to find fault, so our preparations went forward quickly. A fire was already set, and its grateful warmth was soon adding to our comfort. The woman bustled about in true housewifely style, doing what she could for us, and among her good deeds was the starting of supper by the heat. For this I was thankful, since Mademoiselle would be relieved of the necessity of partaking of cold food.

With all under way so well, I ventured to go to Hugh. I found that he had stabled the horses in the dark, but I was delayed longer than I expected, and when I returned to the house there was a new person for me to look at.

The man of the place was there—a slight, thin-faced, black-haired individual in oddly loose garments. First sight gave me a good impression, but he added to it by coming forward and welcoming us as amiably as his wife had done. He added to her informaton by announcing his name as Peter Dart, and hers as Betsey.

"We are poor," he explained; "so poor that we do not own this half-fallen shanty, but simply occupy it because nobody forbids, yet what we have to offer is at your service. Betsy did right to proffer our small possessions for your use."

I had barely made suitable reply when the rain pounced upon the house, coming with a shriek and a drive that made the old timbers groan dismally, and I was glad Mademoiselle was not exposed to its fury. The first dash of it, being almost a solid sheet, would have drenched her completely.

Within the hour we had eaten heartily, and the combination of our food and that of our new friends made a really palatable meal for all. It was a pleasure to me that Mynheer Winckle had supplied me with enough money so there was no question of a suitable reward for the good will shown to us.

An engaging couple they were, and the more so because I noted that they spoke no rustic dialect, but English of the better sort. Odd dwellers in that wilderness stretch!

Night fell, but we were hopelessly shut up where we were. The rain and wind lessened no part of their fury, and to leave in such a torrent was out of the question. Now and then I looked analytically at Mademoiselle, wondering how she accepted the further delay, but she was like one forgetful, having many friendly words to say to Betsey.

I did not forget. Ordered to reach New Haven with the least possible delay, we were far from our course and unable to make use of the hours set apart for our travel. Vexatious in several ways, it might yet mean grave trouble for us—and I was responsible to my patron.

Still, I was fully satisfied that if I had not made the deviation when above the Harlem we should long before have fallen into the hands of the lady's enemies, and not for a moment did I regret my course. Not in a boastful spirit, but as grave fact, I had not long lived among wild scenes without gaining faith in my judgment.

We did not sit up to listen to the wind and rain, but betook ourselves each to his rest. Dame Betsey, good soul, did the best she could for her fair guest, and I doubt not a comfortable couch was provided. My own bed was the floor, its place just before the outer door, and my sole cover a blanket. Peter Dart was obliged to confess that in declaring I would have nothing more I had nearly claimed all he had to supply.

I fell asleep with my sword by my side, true soldier of fortune that I was, and as peacefully as if in the friendly shadow of Monsieur Rombouts' walls. I awoke—but the awakening was different.

There was a crash of crushed wood, and I came to my feet at a leap, my hand on my sword, my legs firmly planted, my head clear. A heavy weight bore me backward a few paces, staggering, and then I had the scene in my eye from the dull glimmer of the fire.

Men were in the room, and each bore a sword as long as my own, and four faces looked into mine and four keen blades menaced my breast.

"Down with your steel, varlet!" snarled a voice. "At him, men! Take him on all sides! Now!"

I knew that voice. I had heard it in my room in New York, and likewise nigh the Harlem, and now I saw the face of its owner. Trust me that, though there was scant time for details, I would know him again in field or court.

They moved to the attack, and, my word for it, I became a better man in that minute. No longer was I skulking across fields with my neck craned for danger, soft, slow, and furtive, but the enemy was at my face, and my blood leaped gloriously at the scent of battle. The Biting Sword had come into his own, the delight of the affray.

Words were unnecessary to explain, for the door was cracked, and it was clear they had made violent entrance. Good! I would see to it they had their fill.

The leader had planned it well, surmising that I would stand like a turkey waiting slaughter, letting them take me on all four sides at once. In this he erred, and 'twas so amusing that I laughed aloud.

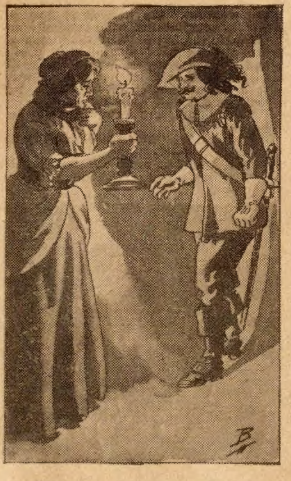
"So," I mocked, "you aspire to 'at him,' do you? Let's show each other the manner of it!"

It had been but a breath between the crashing of the door and the first blow when I stirred. My way was forward, and as I lunged with my sword I thrust the first knave squarely in the side and he gasped, reeled, and dropped his weapon. Thereafter I had but three foemen.

I was among them, careless of consequences, simply because I knew what the consequences would be. They who had come to murder and persecute were babes in the wood, helpless and pitiable—so I thought. It may be that they caught the same idea presently.

In rapid succession I beat down two blades, and smiled upon them like a coquette upon the men she intends to destroy.

"Welcome to the home of the Biting Sword, worthy gentlemen!" I cried gayly, and as I said it I pricked another fellow in the arm. "Sirs, I give you thanks for this pleasure, and I beg you will stay with me. Let it never be said you left a hail comrade in loneliness. Stay—with—me!"



With a candle in her hand.

I was mocking again, beating off three swords at once, making a wall of steel before me that glittered splendidly in the firelight. Yet, even while I baffled their furious attack, I made a discovery. The leader was not a man to be trifled with. He, too, knew something of thrust and parry, and the other knacks of the blade. Not too far could I let him have time unless I wanted a cut to show for it.

I wanted no cut, and I suddenly put muscles, nerves, and brain to it, and reared a shining wave of steel before their eyes and mine, and out of that wave my bitter point nipped at them and had its fill. When I relaxed a bit a second scoundrel was down and but two left.

"King's my life!" stammered one of the twain, flirting away drops of red from a hurt of his own, "the varlet is a demon—nay, better yet, he is the Biting Sword!"

"Stir yourself!" commanded the leader, fiercely. "Can you do nothing but punch holes in the air?"

"Body o' me! but what better are you doing, Captain Blair?"

He talked too much for his good. A thrust, a wrench, and his weapon went flying against the roof.

"Now, Captain Blair"—I had not missed the name, you see—"we have it betwixt us. On guard! Do you carry sword or cheese-knife?"

I was home to his hide with my taunt, and he flushed a red that delighted me and came on bravely. We made music to charm the fairies as we crossed and clanged together.

"Now, now!" I urged. "Meet the bite of my sword. With care for a moment, for I am about to thrust at your neck, and the mark is large. Beware the bite, gallant Captain. Come, come, this will not do! Drop schoolboy fencing and remember your years! A woman could undo you when you fight like that!"

In honesty he was not making it so ill, nor was he a bungler, but if I seem a mere braggart, pray take heed to two things—I was fighting four rascals who were there to murder me, and the wild delight of battle was rioting within me. Was it a time for repeating the words of the dictionary column by column? Not so, but rather the time for besting this haunting cutthroat by the easiest method, and I knew what that way was. He fought none the better for being taunted.

That one of his followers who was still on his feet had his eye open, and he began creeping forward to secure a fallen sword on the floor, but just then Peter Dart came into view, a like weapon in hand, and menaced him so boldly that he halted. My faith! but I loved Peter in that hour.

Had I been sure no other foes were near, I might have played with the unworthy Captain Blair, but it was not prudent to carry a jest too far. I disarmed him at my will, and was about to bestow more good advice, but, weaponless, he took to his heels like a prize runner, and was out of the house at a gallop.

"I expected you to run long before!" was the gibe I sent after him.

Left time to look about me, I saw that all the inmates of the place were astir. Pallid female faces were at the connecting door, but though Mademoiselle was beside the pallid ones, her color was normal and her eyes bright. So was the pistol in her unshaking hand.

"Gloriously won, Master Stelland!" she cried, in keen delight.

I bowed low before her.

"Madam," said I, "'twas nothing to the victory that would have been yours had your steady fingers needed to press the trigger. That I'll swear without fear of contradiction!"

CHAPTER VI.

FLIGHT.

ONE glance was sufficient to show that none of our number had met with disaster, and I strode to the door and out of it. I heard a warning from Mademoiselle as I stepped forth, and knew she feared for me, but I had business in mind.

I was soon aware that no active foe was within a hundred feet, and then I gave heed to something else. The rain had ceased, but the trees whipped lustily in the breath of the wind. This had a meaning for me, especially as I noted that there was practically no dripping from the leaves and branches. Accumulated water had already been shaken clear.

Returning to the house I fixed a scrutinizing regard upon the one enemy who remained with us. He had stayed because he was badly wounded, and I saw that the red flow from his side would soon take his life unless he was seen to promptly. Dropping on my knees, I cut away his clothes for a space and had the hurt in plainer view.

"Leave me alone!" he said morosely. "Would you badger one who is dying?"

"Man," I cried lightly, "watch me badger you. I'll fix you so you will spend Christmas with your lady-love and sing songs gayly with her. Take it from my lips that the Biting Sword can heal as well as slash. Dame Betsey, have you water and bandages nigh."

Both were brought, and as I was really no mean surgeon in backwoods style, I presently had the blood stopped and the wound dressed neatly and firmly. The fellow looked on with an expression of wonder.

"I did not expect this," he finally said, a choke in his voice.

"It is the way of the Biting Sword!"

Now, it was Mademoiselle who spoke those words, and as I swept a glance her way I saw that light in her eyes I had learned to delight in. Admiration she expressed, as if we had been old comrades and true. It was long since I had received a compliment that pleased me more.

"Had we won you would have been killed," persisted the stranger, with dogged devotion to his idea.

"You did not win. I did. Result, you live. What will you do for me in return?"

"Ask, and 'tis yours if I can do it."

"Well, then, why is this campaign against us here?"

"Bah!" he growled, again morose. "You have asked me the one thing I do not know. If I did, I would tell him who has saved me from bleeding to death. I am of New York, and I fear I am a scurvy knave. Certainly I am for hire. Captain Blair came to me and engaged me with others to pursue you to New Haven, but why I don't know. Not one word of that did he say to any of us. Our duty was to act the wolf, but why the game was wanted I cannot tell."

"Who is Captain Blair?"

"Even that I don't know. I never saw him until two nights ago. Master, I am grievously sorry, but I swear I know nothing of the nature and reason for the villainy. My life is something to me, and I see the man who is called the Biting Sword in a new light. Would that I could help him by act or word!"

There was sincerity in this, and I saw he was less of a scoundrel than his deeds of the night proclaimed. It was not the first time I had helped myself by helping a wounded rascal, and after consultation with Peter and Betsey we got him to bed. He would finally be as good as new, but a week or more was required to get him on his feet.

This was barely finished when there was a stir at the outer door, and Hugh entered on his hand and knees. Pausing, he looked back anxiously, and then addressed me.

"Sir," he said, "we must get away from here. Enemies are nigh and closing in on this house, and we shall all be captured——"

"Closing in? When did you see them?" I interrupted.

"Not five minutes back, master. Lying in my quarters I thought I heard the sound of steel upon steel, so I went forth to reconnoiter. I heard a word that showed me you had fought off a part of them, but they are again closing in."

I drew my sword from its scabbard.

"We will give them hospitable sport," I remarked nonchalantly.

"No, no!" cried Mademoiselle. "We must flee. Get the horses ready at once. We will go! Were not our orders to travel by night?"

"It will now be wet only under foot," said Hugh, eagerly. "The wind has shaken all rain from the trees."

"Give the plan over," I directed. "Even if the weather was less inclement 'tis out of question. We cannot pass men who are closing in upon us."

"Oh! but you can!" cried Peter. "Know you that there is a secret underground passage to the ravine, and from there you can ride in the hollow of it to safety. My word for it, unless they have found the stable and the horses they will not see you as you go."

"They have not seen either," declared Hugh.

"But," I asked, "does the ravine long continue?"

"For some distance, and then you can enter Strongbow Woods. Do you know the game-trail there?"

"No, though I do know of the woods. 'Tis a place reputed impassable."

"I will guide you through!" Peter cried. "Trust me for that. Ay, I will take you out of their clutches neatly."

"So my good man will!" declared Dame Betsey.

Now, we had but little time for details, and the plan meant much to us. If there was a game-trail it would foil our foes prettily, but to use it I had to decide that Peter was trustworthy and temporarily give over my leadership. I glanced at Mademoiselle, who smiled and nodded, and I took her unspoken advice, since it matched my own ideas.

Two minutes later we were threading the secret passage, with Hugh carrying our pack and Peter a candle. Dame Betsey was left alone, but she scouted the fear of danger, and I was satisfied that she would be safe. In warring upon us Captain Blair would be certain to avoid molesting others.

It was not long before we were passing through the ravine, all being mounted but Peter and myself. I led my horse. The depression was inky dark, but the sky above was clearing, and the wind-flogged branches that overhung the way in part occasionally revealed a misty star.

For some minutes it was a time of acute anxiety, for if a foe chanced to be near the ravine he would hear us, even if his eyes told nothing, so I went in readiness for trouble. As we advanced the peril grew less, and when we had passed through the depression and plunged into the thick woods beyond I began to breathe more freely.

There, too, we had more good luck. A horse, saddled and bridled, was cropping the smaller twigs on the bushes. He had doubtless escaped from our enemies, but he was a treasure to us. At my suggestion Peter mounted, and we pressed on more rapidly.

The game-trail was better than I had dared hope. It cut the forest cleanly, and footing was decent, while its width, insufficient for two abreast, was exactly as I would have had it. If Peter's judgement was good we had reason to hope for a favorable issue to our venture.

Finally I fell back to Mademoiselle's side. It pained me that she would have such hardships, and I had already found that the water was not wholly whipped clear of the branches.

"It is lamentable," I said, "that you must needs go on when the weather is so wretched."

"Sir," she replied brightly, "were not our orders to travel by night?"

"Ay, madam, but naught was said of going in a half-gale."

"Half-gale or whole gale, orders prevail. Good Master Stelland, give never a thought of me. I would be in New Haven, and I trust I am no craven. Ah! sir, would that I could handle a sword as you did this night in the house. I watched longer than you suspect, and, my faith! it was glorious! They who named you the Biting Sword named you well."

Hard knocks had partly dulled the vanity of man that was within me, but her speech fell agreeably on my ears. Fate had robbed me of nearly everything but my sword and my honor, and I valued my treasures.

Before I could reply our advance halted, and as I rejoined Peter he spoke with manifest anxiety.

"I fear, master," he said, "that we have enemies ahead of us!"

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The Way They Managed.

When the doctor called to see the baby its mother informed him that the medicine left for the infant the day before was all gone.

"Impossible!" declared the surprised physician. "I told you to give him a teaspoonful once an hour."

"Yes, but John and mother and I and the nurse have each had to take a teaspoonful, too, in order to get baby to take it."

Mrs. Raleigh's Secret

Or, The World's Standard - By Emma Howard Wight

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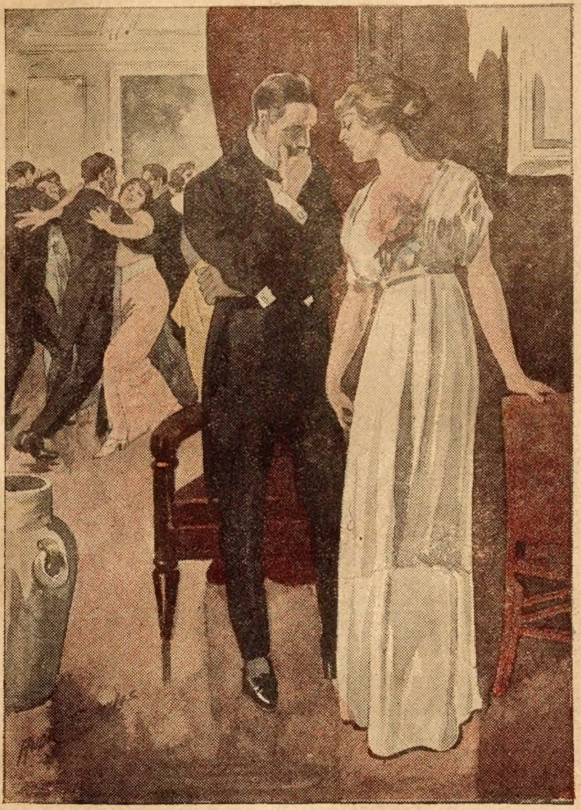
Begun in No. 9, February 28. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER I.—(Continued).

"ANNA thought as you wouldn't want to marry her if you knowed that—that—" hesitated Martha.

She stopped as he laughed. "What an idea! That is oversensitiveness. Because she is not your own child and was persecuted by a scoundrel? Nonsense!" said John Raleigh.

Martha seemed about to speak when Anna came out of the house. The girl stopped, looking questioningly at Raleigh. He went toward her smilingly.



"The woman is your mother!"

"Mother has told you, John?" she asked.

"Yes, she has told me," he replied.

"Well?"

"My dear girl, there is no reason in the world why you should not become my wife," he assured her. "You have been unfortunate, that is all."

While they were speaking, Martha stood looking at them in a half-frightened sort of way.

"You mean that what mother told you makes no difference?" asked Anna.

"Why should it make any difference?"

"I thought it might."

He laughed happily and took her in his arms. She looked up at him wonderingly.

"Oh, John, are you sure, quite sure, that you still wish to make me your wife?" she asked.

He bent his head and kissed her as he replied:

"Quite sure!"

Martha turned away, bowing her head. She had not intended to mislead John Raleigh. Hers was a sin of omission.

CHAPTER II.

TWENTY years later. A ball was in progress in the home of the Raleighs. In one of the receptionrooms, Horace Shipley, a clean-shaven man, about forty-five years of age, well-groomed, in faultless evening dress, was standing, holding aside the portieres and looking into the ballroom.

"Helen Raleigh is dancing again with Paul Hamilton," he murmured. "If I am not mistaken it is for the third time tonight." He dropped portieres and turned away with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "She favors him! Well, why not, since she is in love with him?" He smiled cynically. "Rather a formidable obstacle in the way of my winning her. But I have never allowed obstacles to daunt me when I wanted anything very badly. And I do want—Helen Raleigh."

A very attractive woman, about thirty-five years of age, very beautifully and fashionably gowned, came into the room.

"Mrs. Armitage, good evening!" said Shipley, bowing.

"Have you, like myself, a penchant for solitude this evening?" asked Evelyn Armitage, as she came forward and sank down upon a couch.

"Perhaps so," he replied, coming and standing beside her. He studied her with a smile in which there was a touch of insolence.

She glanced up at him. "Well?"

"You make me think of Sam Weller's advice to his son, 'Beware of the vidders,'" said Shipley.

She shrugged her shoulders whimsically. "I am not as dangerous as I look," she declared. "I wish I were." She paused.

"To the peace of mind of Paul Hamilton," supplemented Shipley.

"You clever man! How did you guess?" exclaimed Evelyn.

"It isn't hard! You don't make much of an effort to conceal your penchant for Hamilton," answered Shipley.

"So it appears," said Evelyn, ruefully.

"And you find him proof against allurement?"

"He is adamant."

"He has—changed."

"Yes, since he fell in love with Helen Raleigh." She glanced up at him with a malicious little laugh. "I suppose that's only natural. Don't you think so?"

"It doesn't always follow," declared Shipley. "A man may be heartbound to one woman, and still be susceptible through his senses to other women."

"It isn't that way with Paul Hamilton," said Evelyn. "He is very sincerely and devotedly in love. But one woman exists for him. He is invulnerable. I've tested him, and I know." She frowned and tapped her foot petulantly. "He—he is simply exasperating."

"I can imagine that you find him rather trying," said Shipley, amused.

"I am crazy about Paul Hamilton," declared Evelyn, with refreshing candor. Horace regarded her thoughtfully. "He appeals to me more than any man I have ever known. I thought when George Armitage died, and I was free, that the sensation was so delightful I would never want to marry again. But——" she made an expressive gesture.

"You are willing to take again upon yourself the shackles of matrimony?"

"Yes, I would marry Paul Hamilton tomorrow if he wanted me," replied Evelyn, plaintively. "But he has gone and fallen in love with that unformed chit of a girl, Helen Raleigh. I never bothered about that affair of Paul's with that dancing girl, Florine. A man does not really love a creature like that. But I am frightfully jealous of Helen Raleigh," and she gave a big sigh.

"Do you think she cares for him?" Shipley seated himself beside her.

"Of course she does," she looked at him. "Can't you see that for yourself?"

"Perhaps I am trying to delude myself into believing that she does not," replied Shipley.

Evelyn smiled. "I fancy you and I are in the same boat," she remarked.

"If you mean that I want to marry Helen Raleigh, you're right," he admitted. "I do. Our positions are similar to a certain extent. But I am not so easily discouraged as you. I haven't given up winning the woman I love, despite all obstacles."

"I am sure I don't see how you'll get around them," said Evelyn, musingly. "You are a very rich man; Paul Hamilton is not. But your money will have no temptation for Helen Raleigh. She's not that kind of girl."

"No, she isn't," smiled Shipley. "If she were, I wouldn't be so bent on marrying her."

"Why are you so bent on marrying her?" queried Evelyn, curiously. "She's sweet and pretty, but nothing remarkable."

Shipley's eyes lighted with a touch of passion.

"I want her youth, her freshness, her innocence," he murmured.

"Oh," exclaimed Evelyn, "you're hunting a new sensation!"

Shipley laughed. "Perhaps. I take it for granted that you are not particularly anxious for Helen Raleigh to marry Paul Hamilton?"

"Of course not," admitted Evelyn, readily. "But what can I do? He loves her; he does not love me."

"You might be able to console him—if she refused to marry him," suggested Shipley.

"That is true," said Evelyn, thoughtfully. "He might turn to me. But she won't refuse him," shaking her head dejectedly. "I am convinced of that."

"She might—if she knew about Florine," observed Shipley.

Evelyn shook her head.

"Oh, that's a thing of the past! He's broken with Florine. He's turned over a new leaf since he fell in love. Of course it doesn't matter what he did—before."

"I am not so sure of that," said Shipley, musingly. "It might matter to a girl like Helen Raleigh."

"Do you believe she would be quite so—so silly as that?" queried Evelyn.

"Try her," murmured Shipley.

Evelyn looked at him quickly. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"Tell her about Florine."

Evelyn was silent for a moment. "It's a mean thing to do."

"You think so?" Evelyn nodded. "But it may cause her to refuse him."

Evelyn was silent for a moment or so. "I'll do it!" she said, at length.

Shipley nodded approvingly.

At that moment Helen Raleigh, a pretty, sweet-looking girl, dressed simply and girlishly in white, entered from the ballroom with Paul Hamilton, a handsome young fellow of splendid physique.

"This is our dance, Mrs. Armitage," said Paul, coming forward.

Shipley arose, bowing to Helen. Evelyn took Paul's arm and they passed into the ballroom.

"You are engaged to me for this dance, Miss Raleigh," said Shipley, approaching Helen. "But I would prefer talking with you if you are not particularly desirous of dancing."

"Indeed, I shall be glad to rest," replied Helen, seating herself as she spoke.

Shipley came and stood beside her. "Helen!"

She looked up at him, startled. "Pardon me, if I am abrupt," he smiled a little. "But we may be interrupted at any moment. I love you! Will you become my wife?"

She shrank from him. "No, I cannot," she replied.

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"Why?" he queried.

"I do not love you," she replied simply.

"I am willing to marry you without your loving me," he declared.

She looked at him coldly, repelled. "You are willing to marry a girl who does not love you?" she exclaimed. "Marriage, without love, seems to me—horrible. I think it is a—sin."

"Marriage, with love, does not always prove the happiest," declared Shipley.

A soft, dreamy look stole into Helen's eyes. "I do not believe that," she declared.

Shipley looked at her, her sweet fair face wore an enrapt look. He turned away, frowning and biting his lip.

"There must be happiness where there is—love," she murmured, softly.

"Yes, for a time," observed Shipley, cynically. "Then comes disillusionment." Helen shook her head with an incredulous smile. "That is true! It often happens. The love that comes after marriage is the better love, the more enduring." He bent over her. "I will teach you to love me, if you will marry me, Helen."

"You could not, it would be impossible," she declared, with a touch of vehemence. "Mr. Shipley, I have given you my answer. I cannot marry you!"

"Do not decide at once," he pleaded. "Take time to think it over."

She arose and moved away from him. "No amount of thinking would make any difference," she declared. "Please do not say any more."

He went up to her. "Helen, I cannot give up you," he cried, passionately. "I will not!" She looked at him, displeased. "You do not know how much I want you." She turned away coldly, untouched. He continued, unheedingly: "You have no conception what it would mean to me to have you for my wife." He tried to take her hand, but she repulsed him. "Have you no feeling of pity for me, Helen?"

"I am sorry to give you pain," she replied.

"If you will marry me, Helen, you shall never know what it means to have a wish unfulfilled, a desire ungratified," he urged.

"Why will you not take me seriously, Mr. Shipley?" she asked, with a touch of weariness. "I cannot marry you!"

"I will not take 'no' for an answer, I still hope to win you," he declared.

Before she had time to make any reply, her mother entered the room. Anna Raleigh had changed from a young girl into a very handsome woman. She was handsomely gowned. John Raleigh had made a success of his life. He was a celebrated criminal lawyer, and while not a rich man had amassed a comfortable fortune.

Helen turned with a sigh of relief toward her mother. Shipley bowed to Anna and passed into the ballroom.

"Not dancing, dear?" murmured Anna, looking at Helen with a smile.

"No," replied Helen, "I was engaged to Mr. Shipley, but we did not dance."

Anna glanced at her a little questioningly, as she seated herself upon a couch.

"I suppose dancing does not appeal to a man of Mr. Shipley's age," she observed.

Helen came and sat down beside her.

"Mother, you and father married for love, did you not?" she asked.

"Yes, dear," answered Anna, very simply.

"You have been happy?"

"Very, very happy!"

"You care as much for each other as you did when you were first married, do you not?"

Anna smiled. "I care more for your father, Helen. The years have but intensified my love."

"How is it with father?"

It was a moment or so before Anna spoke.

"I do not believe your father could love me any more than he did at the time we were married," she replied, at length. "He loves me as few men are capable of loving."

"He doesn't love you any more than you love him, mother," declared Helen, confidently.

Anna glanced at her a little curiously. "What makes you think that, Helen?" she asked.

"I just feel it, mother. Indeed, I believe that you love father more than he loves you."

Anna smiled indulgently. "You only fancy that, dear. It would be impossible," and a curious look stole over her face.

"Some persons have horribly cynical ideas about love marriages," said Helen, rising.

"Do not permit such persons to make you think that, Helen," said Anna, earnestly. "Never marry for any reason save love. No woman can be happy married to a man she does not love. I never could understand any mother wishing her daughter to marry for money."

"It seems that a good many of them do."

"Yes, unfortunately."

John Raleigh entered just then, he looked older, his hair had whitened at the temples, but he was handsome and distinguished in appearance. Helen turned affectionately to meet him.

"You look very sweet this evening!" he said, his eyes resting upon her very tenderly. She was the only child, infinitely dear to both parents, but perhaps dearer to the father even than to the mother. She put her arms about his neck, as he drew her to him.

"I am glad you think so, father," she said.

"I believe Helen would rather hear you say that, John, than any one else," declared Anna, as she looked at them affectionately.

"Of course I would," exclaimed Helen. "There is no one in all the world as dear to me as my father."

"What do you say, Helen?" queried, Anna, smilingly.

"I shall never love any one more than I love father," declared Helen, promptly."

"When you were a little tot, Helen, your nurse once came to me and said she believed you loved your father more than you loved me," said Anna. "She asked me if I were not jealous."

"And were you?" asked her husband, with a half-smile.

Anna shook her head. "No," she replied, very simply.

"Why, father, if I did love you more than I love mother, it would be all right with her," declared Helen. "I believe she wants me to. She's always singing your praise," nodding her head archly at Anna. "You know you are, mother," She moved toward the door leading into the ballroom. "How can I help believing that no girl ever had so good, so dear a father?"

As she passed out, Anna arose and went up to her husband.

"We have been very happy, have we not, John?" she asked, looking at him with a strange wistfulness.

"Why, of course, we have dear," he replied smilingly.

"You have never regretted having married me, John?"

He looked at her, somewhat surprised.

"Are you serious in asking me that question, Anna?" he asked. She mutely inclined her head. "It seems to me an odd question."

"Oh, I know how broad-minded, how generous you are!" she exclaimed. "But there are times when I cannot help asking myself if you have ever been sorry that you made me your wife."

"Why, my dear?" deprecatingly.

"When I sometimes wonder if you do not wish that I were—different."

John gave a light laugh.

"My dear wife, one of the few faults I have discovered in you during twenty years of married life, is a tendency to self-depreciation. In one of your worth it constitutes a fault. You should know, Anna," more seriously, "that I have never for one single moment regretted our marriage."

Her face flushed, her eyes lighted.

"Oh, John, it makes me so happy to hear you say that!" she exclaimed.

He took her hand, smiling. "As if you didn't know it without my telling you." He drew her hand through his arm. "Come, let us go into the ballroom."

As they moved toward the door leading into the ballroom, a pale-faced, furtive-eyed man entered from the corridor. He was between forty and fifty years of age. His hair was very black and plastered close to his head. His black clothes had a clerical cut.

"That was Mrs. Raleigh and her husband," he murmured, slowly coming forward, and going to a door leading into the ballroom, he put aside the portieres and looked in. "I must find some way of speaking to her alone."

He was still gazing into the ballroom when Horace Shipley entered from the corridor. An amazed look flitted across his face at the sight of the man at the doorway. He crossed the room and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Casper Riplon, what are you doing in this house?" he asked.

The man, addressed as Riplon, turned with a great start.

"Mr. Shipley!" he gasped. A nervous smile distorted his thin lips. "It seems you ain't forgot me, Mr. Shipley?"

"No, I haven't forgotten you," Shipley replied grimly. "The circumstances under which I last saw you were rather calculated to impress you on my mind." Riplon moved uneasily. "You were on trial for blackmail." Riplon glanced about him uneasily. "If I remember aright, you got five years in the penitentiary."

"I'll bid you good evening, sir!" muttered Riplon, making a movement to go out.

Shipley stopped him with a gesture.

"Wait," he said. "I have more to say to you." Riplon stood listening sullenly, as Shipley continued, "Your sentence expired about six months ago." He looked keenly at Riplon. "I believe you are at your old game."

"Believin' ain't knowin', sir," muttered Riplon.

"Perhaps not, but it amounts to about the same thing in this instance. You have some purpose in coming to this house." He paused; Riplon remained doggedly silent. "What is it? I think I can guess. It's for the purpose of blackmail. Come, you had better tell me the truth."

"I ain't got nothin' to tell," declared Riplon. "I ain't come here with no such purpose as you say."

Shipley turned with an air of determination and walked toward the table on which was the telephone. Riplon watched him uneasily.

"What are you goin' to do, Mr. Shipley?" he asked.

"Telephone to police headquarters," replied Shipley.

"Don't do that, sir," exclaimed Riplon. As Shipley turned, he added, "I'll make a clean breast of it."

"All right," said Shipley. He came and stood beside Riplon. "Who is the man you have come here to blackmail?"

"It ain't no man! It's a woman!"

Shipley lifted his brows. "A woman?" Riplon nodded. "Who is the woman?"

"Mrs. Raleigh."

"What!" exclaimed Shipley, amazed. "Impossible!"

"She's the party all right," declared Riplon.

"You mean me to understand that you know something damaging in regard to Mrs. Raleigh?"

Riplon grinned. "Well, I'd call it pretty damaging."

"What is it?"

Riplon gave a cautious glance about him and moved nearer to Shipley, as he replied, "She had a child before her marriage."

"What?" cried Shipley.

"It's straight!" declared Riplon.

There was a moment's silence.

"You came here to blackmail Mrs. Raleigh?" said Shipley.

Riplon shrugged his shoulders.

"If you like to put it that way, sir. I thought as she might make it worth my while not to tell her husband."

"I suppose you have proofs of what you assert?"

"Yes, sir. It wouldn't be no use to come here without them."

"How much money did you expect to extort from Mrs. Raleigh?"

"Well, I should think it ought to be worth a thousand dollars to her."

"I'll buy Mrs. Raleigh's secret from you. I'll give you two thousand dollars for those proofs."

"Done!" exclaimed Riplon.

"You say you have the proofs with you?"

"Sure!" Riplon made a movement to produce them. Shipley stopped him.

"Not here. Go to the library and wait for me there." Riplon nodded and went out. "Fate has played into my hands," exclaimed Shipley, exultingly. "If I am not mistaken in my estimate of Helen Raleigh, she will make any sacrifice to preserve the peace of mind of her parents, to preserve their happiness."

He moved toward the door leading into the corridor. Paul and Helen entered from the ballroom. Absorbed in each other, they did not perceive Shipley. He glanced back at them with a cold, cynical smile, as he went out.

Paul led Helen to a couch.

"I've been trying all the evening to get you to myself," he declared, as they sat down. She gave him a shy glance and looked down. "Helen, I love you! Do you——"

At that moment Evelyn Armitage came into the room. Paul, with a suppressed exclamation of annoyance at the interruption, arose.

"I am dead tired!" exclaimed Evelyn, seating herself beside Helen. "I haven't had one good night's sleep in a month. Society, with its exactions, is a treadmill."

"Still you fall down and worship it," declared Paul.

"True!" murmured Evelyn, thoughtfully. She turned to Helen. "There is something so restful about you, dear," she went on, caressingly. "I think it must be because you are untouched by the storms of life, unworn by its emotions. I envy you your tranquillity. Paul does, too, I am sure." She looked at him with a whimsical smile. "Paul and I have been tossed by the storms of life, we are worn and jaded from its emotions."

Paul shrugged his shoulders. "Mrs. Armitage is a creature of moods," he said to Helen. "You must not take all she says too seriously. I am engaged for the dance just beginning."

He bowed and pasesd into the ballroom.

"That's too bad!" exclaimed Evelyn. "Do you think that am I insincere?"

"I have never really thought about it," replied Helen, with a smile.

"I suppose few persons are really sincere," declared Evelyn. "A really sincere person, one who is sincere and lives up to it, would be regarded rather in the light of a freak. The life we society people lead does not permit of sincerity."

"I would be sorry to believe that," said Helen.

"Paul Hamilton is a dear fellow!" declared Evelyn with an abrupt change of

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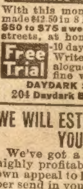
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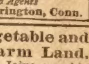
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subject. "I am very fond of him. Rumor has it that I am in love with him. I thought it was a pity—that entanglement of his."

"Entanglement?" murmured Helen.

"Yes, that affair with Florine, the dancer. Of course you have heard of it?"

"No, I have never heard of it," replied Helen, mechanically.

"You haven't? Why, it was notorious! He was seen with her everywhere; spent just lots of money on her, much more than he could afford, I am afraid. Creatures like Florine are vampires, you know." She glanced at Helen and laughed. "Why, how shocked you look!"

"Shocked!" murmured Helen, in a low voice. She had grown a little pale. "I think it is—shameful!"

"Oh, men, will do those things, you know!" declared Evelyn, nonchalantly.

"No, not all men," said Helen. "They are not all like—that."

"Oh, I don't know! Every man is weak where there is a woman in question. Those men whom we believe to be the strongest very often prove the weakest. It's their nature, my dear. Paul Hamilton is no worse than the majority of men. It is said that he has broken with that unspeakably graceful creature, Florine. Men have the best of us in this world, my dear," rising as she spoke. "They get more out of life than we women—dare." She moved toward the ballroom. "We have to pay too dearly for our—indiscretions. The world exacts a heavy toll. And the woman—pays."

Her light laugh floated back to Helen, as she passed out.

"And he is like—that!" murmured the girl. The next moment she forgot her misery in indignation. "And he dared to tell me that he loved me! I am so glad we were interrupted before I had time to admit that I loved him. How gladly I would have promised to become his wife! I will not marry him—now."

John Raleigh came into the room and approached Helen. "How pale you look, Helen!" he exclaimed. He sat down beside her. "What is the matter? Tired?"

"Yes, I am tired," the girl replied, with great weariness.

"You've been dancing too much!"

"I suppose so," murmured Helen, abstractedly. She turned suddenly to her father. "Mrs. Armitage told me something shameful about Paul Hamilton, father!"

"Shameful?" exclaimed John Raleigh.

"It was in regard to a dancer called Florine," explained Helen, flushing.

John Raleigh smiled. "Is that all?"

"All?" Helen looked at him, surprised.

"It was rather an unfortunate entanglement," John admitted.

Helen paled. "Then it is true, father?"

"Why, yes, it is true, I believe."

"And he dared to tell me that he loved me!" cried Helen, indignantly.

"Oh, that affair of Florine is broken off!" declared John Raleigh. "Who told you about it, Helen? Mrs. Armitage? She probably had a motive." He glanced keenly at Helen. "You are taking this affair too seriously, Helen."

"Too seriously, father?" She looked at him with involuntary reproach.

"Yes. You see we must look at such matters from the world's standpoint."

"What is the world's standpoint?"

"Leniency. The world does not take very severe cognizance of such indiscretions on the part of a man."

"Do you mean, father, that a man who wishes to lead an immoral life is privileged to do so?" asked Helen, surprised and repelled.

John Raleigh shrugged his shoulders. "No, I do not mean that exactly," he replied. "There are two standards of morality—one for the man and another for the woman."

"I think I understand," said Helen, thoughtfully. At that moment Anna entered without their perceiving her. "A man's immoralities do not injure him socially." Anna stood still, listening.

CHAPTER III.

"WELL, not to any great extent," John Raleigh admitted.

"But it is not so in regard to a woman?" queried Helen.

Anna looked at her husband, waiting for him to answer. She shrank and quivered under his words when they came.

"No, there is another standard for the woman. A man, as long as he is not a cad or blackguard, can do with comparative impunity those things which place a woman outside the social pale forever."

"The sin is the same whether committed by man or woman," declared Helen.

Anna gave an anguished look at her, and with bowed head turned to go out.

"The world does not so regard it," said John.

"But God does."

Anna went slowly from the room.

"I am of course familiar with the arguments religion and moralists bring to bear upon the subject," John admitted. "But the world's decree stands and will continue to stand until the end of time."

"Why is it?" asked Helen. "Why is the woman branded while the man goes free?"

John Raleigh smiled whimsically. "My dear, you mustn't expect me to answer a conundrum that has puzzled the world for centuries."

"I think the world's code of morality is cruel and unjust to the woman," declared Helen.

"In a sense, yes," said John Raleigh, thoughtfully. "But there is another way of looking at it. More is expected of the woman because she is finer than the man. Purity is the perfume, the essence of womanhood. It's a perversion of all that woman was meant to be when she loses her purity."

"I think that is true, father!"

He smiled. "So you see, my dear, that after all, the attitude of the world toward the woman is a tribute to womanhood." He laid an affectionate hand on her arm. "If you care for Paul Hamilton, my child, do not permit this matter to influence you against him. It is a great mistake for a woman to make a grievance of anything in the past life of the man she loves or to whom she is married. Paul Hamilton's a fine fellow! There is no man to whom I would more willingly intrust your happiness. A man who has led a strictly moral life does not always make the best husband. But above everything else, I want my little girl to be happy," and he drew her to him with great tenderness.

"I love you, father! I love you so!" she murmured, clinging to him fondly.

"I like to hear you say that," he said, smiling.

"The first words mother taught me to say were, 'I love father!' I taught myself to say, 'I love you, mother!' "

"That's a dear mother of yours," declared John Raleigh. "I wonder where she is? She was to join me here." He released Helen. "I'll go find her," and he went out.

Helen started for the ballroom as Shipley entered from corridor.

"One moment, Miss Raleigh!" he said. Helen stopped reluctantly. "I want to speak to you."

"I want to return to the ballroom, Mr. Shipley," said Helen.

"Pardon me, but I must have your attention for a little while," he persisted.

He spoke quietly, but with determination. She glanced at him coldly. She did not like his persistency, but for some reason she yielded.

"I cannot give you much time," she said.

"I shall endeavor to be as brief as possible." He paused just an instant. "Tonight I asked you to become my wife." She made a movement to interrupt him. "Hear me out, if you please." His manner was impelling. She listened against her will. "You refused me. I told you I would not give up the hope of winning you. When I made that assertion, I did not think that a possibility would so soon arise of that hope being fulfilled."

Helen smiled contemptuously. "You must be laboring under some extraordinary delusion," she declared.

"I think—not!"

"Then let me again tell you that nothing would induce me to become your wife."

"Do not be too sure of—that."

Helen flushed indignantly. "I am sure of it," she declared. "What could possibly induce me to marry you?" and she smiled with a touch of scorn.

"What could induce you?" He paused. "Your love for your parents."

"What?"

"The peace and the happiness of both your father and your mother are in my hands. I can destroy both at one blow."

She stared at him a moment. "That is impossible!" she declared, incredulously. "It is nevertheless a fact."

"I do not believe it!" she looked at him. He met her eyes steadily with a look that startled her. "What could give you such power?" She struggled against the fear that was creeping over her.

He moved nearer to her, replying in a low voice, "The knowledge of a woman's shame."

She drew herself up proudly. "What has that to do with me?"

"The woman is your—mother!"

Helen stared at him as though stunned.

This strange story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it. The surest way to get the Ledger is to subscribe for it and have it come to your home regularly. Today is a good time to attend to this.

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The batter—"Wis de utmose deference to M'sieur's eminent intelligence, it iss M'sieur who iss wrong."

The fans in chorus—"Oh, lala, play ze ball!"

The captain of the side at bat, coming up—"M'sieur-ze-umpire, I salute you.

The umpire lifting his high hat—"Accept my compliments, Captain."

The captain—"My card, M'sieur."

The umpire—"And mine, Captain."

The captain—"My friends, ze pitchaire and ze shortstop will honor zereselfs by calling upon you zis evening at seex by ze clock. If it is agreeable to M'sieur ze meeting will tak' place at seex by ze morning clock, behind ze Grande 'Ootel. Au revoir."

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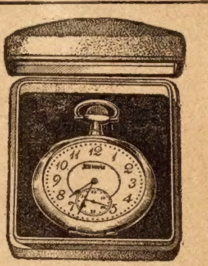

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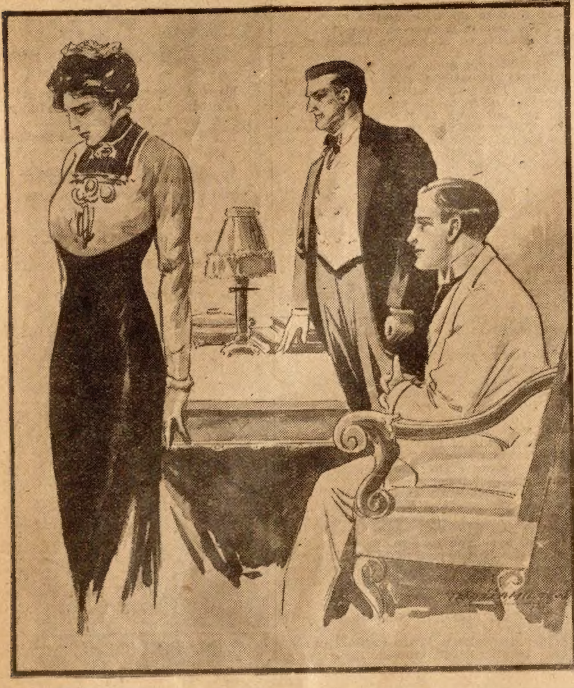
The Signs in Red

Or, The Hereside Mystery By William H. Manning



"I was the woman!"

[Copyright 1914 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 7, February 14. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER XII.

MISSING.

As SOON as day dawned Borrowdale called a man servant and placed him in charge of the prisoner. Then he came to me with a relieved expression and surprised me by shaking my hand genially.

"I take it we are all alive," he said, with a cheerful ring in his voice. "No more fights, Saywood—eh?"

"Not in my quarter, sir," I answered, smiling.

"All serene with me. I've given our captive the third degree to the full of my ability, but he is a Gibraltar. I've secured nothing from him. Still I feel encouraged—somehow."

"We have partly drawn the fangs of the serpent by capturing one of their number."

"Yes," he agreed heartily. "Also, we have lessened the count of the opposition. They will see that we are not to be trifled with now."

"It is odd that, after all their former secrecy, they came so openly last night."

"I hadn't thought of that. Yes, it was odd. Common sense would tell them we would be on watch, yet they brought their ladder as if the way was as open as a public road. There's another singular point. We don't know how they entered previously, and the ladder, last night, seems to be a falling off in their methods."

"Decidedly so."

"Well, it does not matter. We are masters of the situation." He did not explain this claim, and I felt that it was based on no ground more substantial than hope.

"We have it in our power to be masters," I said, earnestly. "You say you object to the police being called in, but I infer you don't intend to remain idle. When do we move?"

"Move?" he repeated, his manner blank.

"Yes. I mean, when do we march against the rest of the gang? We have farmhands enough to form a strong party, and the sooner we get into the woods the better. Shall you surround their haunt, or rely upon a swift march in a body? If we enter about where I did yesterday we are rather likely to surprise them and have the whole lot in our clutches in short order."

"Not so fast, Saywood," he exclaimed, smilingly. "I have no intention of marching against them. As I suggested before, the capture of one of the party settles their case, for they will see they are helpless."

"On the contrary, they will move mountains to rescue their ally, which means that our danger will be doubled. Borrowdale, I beg that you will not leave them free to attack us again. No, no! That's not the right method. Strike, man, while we can. Seize the whole gang, and we need not worry over what may happen to Miss Miami and Mrs. Ellett when our vigilance has relaxed. Make your ladies safe, Borrowdale. Capture all of our foes and safeguard things here."

Still smiling, he shook his head decisively.

"You argue eloquently, Saywood, but not convincingly. We have one prisoner and he is a troublesome problem. Add two to three more and what can we do? This is not a bastile, nor are we the law——"

"The village police are the law."

"Granted, but it is my desire, as you know, to settle this quietly and permanently. I think it has been done by seizing one of their number. They know our power at last."

"Sir," I pleaded, "I beg you to remember that these men you are willing should remain at liberty have threatened to kill your daughter."

For a moment he wavered perceptibly, but his stubborn jaw quickly settled into its most emphatic show of decision.

"That was when they were masters, but the tables are turned. We are now on top. My good friend, I appreciate your intentions, but we will let your idea rest and see what they will do."

I gave up. Mine was a lost hope, just as I had foreseen it would be, and we were still committed to the policy of giving the enemy full chance to act as they pleased.

It was almost incredible that Borrowdale should leave his women open to further danger, but I knew him better than formerly. Back of these events was the shadow of a secret, family or otherwise, and it bound the master of Hereside hand and foot. Wondering whether he had a guilty conscience or something else that he dared not act, I accepted the unavoidable. My loyalty had not wavered and I was keyed up for further fighting.

I left Borrowdale and had a look at the prisoner. Seen by daylight there was still more evidence that he was a hard customer, a product, I suspected, of the city that lay in the lower part of the State. That a vein of levity went with his lawless attributes was hardly in his favor since it enabled him to meet dilemmas with a more unshakable front. Wasting no time on him, I soon turned back to rejoin my host.

As I neared the main upper hall I saw Miami and Mrs. Corbin and heard the former giving some directions for the household management for the day. It was in my mind to go to them and endeavor to act the part of the cheerful ally, but before I reached their side Borrowdale came hastily out of his room. I saw at once that something new was wrong.

"Who has been in my room?" he demanded hurriedly.

"I have seen no one," Miami replied, wonder in her expression.

"Esther went there briefly to do the dusting," the housekeeper explained.

How long was she there?"

"Only a few minutes, sir. The room had been used so little that less dust than usual was to be seen to. I was at the door a part of the time.

"But not all?"

"No, sir!"

"Did you see anything unusual in her hands?"

"Why, no, sir!"

"I have been robbed!" Borrowdale exclaimed.

"Robbed?" Miami echoed.

"Yes. Not of money or such valuables, but the letters I have received from our foes and the knotted ropes have disappeared." Keenly interested, I pushed forward to a central position.

"When did this happen?" I demanded.

"I don't know. My latest look at them was shortly before seven o'clock of last evening. Now, they are gone. Don't think that I have regarded them as highly important, for I never did, but the point of interest is this: The traitor in our household is still here."

"Are you sure," Miami asked anxiously, "that they have been taken?"

"Unfortunately, yes. They were not under lock and key, but tucked into a little nook in my desk. I suppose somebody entered the room in the night and—the rest is clear."

I remembered the dark hall of the waning night, the slight figure that had come from Borrowdale's room and entered Miami's. Instinctively my gaze went to her face, but it was only gently solicitous. In an instant I regretted having questioned her even by a look, for it was absurd that she should tamper with her father's property.

But who was the slight woman who had entered her room? The description fitted Esther, the housemaid, but the dim light had left me baffled before, and it was the same now.

"Has any other room been entered?" I asked quietly.

"Mine has not," Miami answered with a nod. "That is"——she hesitated thoughtfully—"I suppose not. I have followed my usual way of leaving the door unlocked."

"That practice should be dropped," declared Mrs. Corbin. "I remember, Miss

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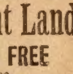

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Miami, that we agreed together that the window was the chief vulnerable point, and that to be shut in with an intruder was worse than to take risks on an unlocked door, yet, after this—but pardon me—that is for you and Mr. Borrowdale to decide."

"Mrs. Corbin," he exclaimed, "have Esther here at once. We have trusted that girl, but the easy way can no longer be permitted. We must know who this traitor is that is constantly helping our enemies. We will search for the stolen articles, but I feel that it will be in vain. We are not likely to find the missing things."

He took a few hasty steps and then wheeled upon us again. "Who," he cried vehemently," is that traitor?"

CHAPTER XIII.

A SURPRISE.

WE SEARCHED the house for the stolen letters and knots, but did not find them. Meanwhile, Borrowdale was questioning Esther. When I next had speech with him he reported briefly.

"Nothing learned!"

"Did you," I asked, "carry out your plan of severity?"

"Well, no," he returned, suddenly downcast. "To be frank, Saywood, I have the utmost faith in all the members of my household, including young Esther, and couldn't be harsh with her. As a stern inquisitor I failed ingloriously. Still, I'm sure Esther did not steal them."

I made no reply, nor did I mention the person I had seen in the dusk then or later. Why should I? Having no clew to what she looked like, it was absurd to waste my breath in saying that I had seen somebody pass from his room to Miami's. Even if this had been the thief it gave no light.

We settled down to our regular routine, doing very little except that Borrowdale tried his luck again with the prisoner, and again gained no light. The self styled Columbus was, however, destined to come into prominence before the day ended.

At two o'clock in the afternoon my host and I were together in his room, when sounds of an altercation at the front door reached us. Borrowdale listened without hearing a word and finally rose.

"I gave the servant orders to deal rather curtly with callers, and it seems he is obeying directions. I'll see who it is."

As we stepped into the hall steps sounded on the stairs, and the servant appeared with a muscular man of middle age at his heels. It was at once apparent that the stranger was coming against the will of our man, but the latter had his word

"He refused to stay at the door, sir."

"Right, I did," agreed the intruder. "Your flunky was too slow for my taste and I would not wait——"

"Sir," interrupted Borrowdale, pacifically, "if you have business I am entirely at your service."

"Oh! then we need not quarrel. My errand is imperative, but wholly commonplace. I am a detective from the city and in search of runaway criminals. All I want is to ask if you have seen suspicious men around here within twenty-four hours—strangers, you know?"

Borrowdale looked at him in brief silence. I have never known a person who had more respect for the law and its demands than he, and the old mood came upon him then. Afterward, he told me he forgot for a time what might be the result to us, and thought only of the law and its visible representatives

"I think I can tell you, yes," he returned. "Last night men tried to break in here. Two escaped, but we captured the third and have had him locked up ever since. I've been trying to make him confess."

"If he is one of my men I can swear you failed. Confession is a coat they never wear. Will you let me see him?"

"Certainly, sir. Come with me. Saywood, you can tell more than I, so kindly bear us company."

We went and ushered the officer into the room with the self-styled Columbus. Plainly, recognition was mutual.

"Hallo, Martin!" cried the newcomer, genially.

The prisoner was not genial, for his first look was ferocious, but, as it proved, he knew the folly of acting a part, and he finally grinned sheepishly.

"Why, how are you, Tyrrel?" he growled

"At your old tricks so soon, I see," the officer proceeded.

"Now, don't rub it in, officer!" Columbus implored.

"Where are Wing and Dascott?"

"That's for you to learn, old man. You know I never give a pal away."

"Right, Martin! I'll get them just the same."

Then he turned to Borrowdale again.

"Old offenders all three. Regular job for us detectives to arrest them. Pictures in the rogues' gallery. We had them bottled up in the city for breaking and entering, but they gave us the slip, and, it seems, got busy right away in this section. We traced their automobile far enough to size up the situation Rather neat work, for they did not escape until 2 o'clock Thursday night."

I stared blankly at the speaker. Our first experiences with the men of the red signs and the knotted rope had mainly come before that. Then how could these things dovetail? Martin promptly helped us out.

"Boss," he said to Borrowdale, "this cop has me dead to rights, for he knows me like a book, so I'll be frank with you When you deluged me with questions I told you I knew nothing about the things you mentioned, and, though you didn't believe me, I told the truth. We came here just when Tyrrel says we did and though, for the joke of it, we did take that ladder and try to break in here, we had never molested you before. We have written you no letters, and made no signs in your house, and carried no ropes oddly knotted. If anybody has done this it was not us"

As the daze left my mind I realized that, beginning with the time when Martin and his companions raised the ladder against the wall of the old wing, we had been dealing with persons entirely different from the foes we so much dreaded. No wonder Martin's method of entrance was different from theirs.

"I first saw you," pursued the housebreaker, "when you had your accident with your automobile. You saw Wing, one of my partners, and rose up a bit in your seat to look after him. Doing that, you hit your head against a low-hanging limb, and got the crack that left you senseless after a bit."

"Oh!" muttered Borrowdale, "so that's how I got the blow? When my senses came back I did not remember rising to look."

"See here, Martin!" I interrupted, "did you leave a knotted rope and a paper with scribbling upon it in an old hut?"

"Did we? Not much! It ain't our way to leave anything."

Here ended our association with Martin and his fellow lawbreakers, and when, before dark, the officers had them on their way to the city, they dropped out of sight. For a brief time we had been dealing with the wrong gang, but

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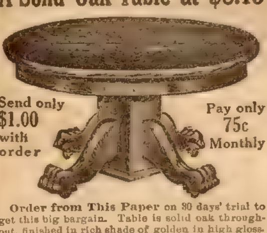

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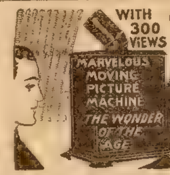
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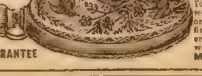

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their going left us none the better off.

Our foes remained hidden, unknown, and as capable of mischief as ever. We tried to adjust ourselves to new conditions, or, rather, to the old order, but it was not comforting. Our fond belief that we had one of our enemies in captivity was gone, and the real enemy looked darker than before. We wondered when they would strike again.

Just before dark Johnson, the servant, had a visitor in the person of his aged father, a man who had been employed by the Borrowdales until advancing years led them to pension him and see him well situated in the village. I spoke with the old gentleman when he arrived, and later, when I was smoking a cigar in the grounds and he was starting homeward, he came upon me and renewed conversation.

He was a trifle weakened mentally, but still active for his age. Immediately taking up the subject of the Borrowdale family, he told of his service and pension, exactly as he had told me before, and then branched off into praise of his benefactors, one and all.

"Three generations I served," he continued, "and never was there a black sheep in the family. All were good, kind, noble folks."

He paused to readjust his necktie, which seemed to give him discomfort.

"Now, some fine old families have undeserved troubles and I knew of such a case. The head of the family married a second wife, and though she was all well enough, he took in trouble with her. She had a son by her first husband, and that son was a bad, bad fellow. Disobedient, wayward, cruel, mischief-making, and as he grew older, dissipated and lawless, he nearly drove his good stepfather mad with his evil deeds. He was a curse to the family, even after he began taking journeys away from home, for he would come back and worry them all. Yes, he was a constant threat, for he swore to kill some of them, and it was a very good thing when, after long following the sea, he died abroad."

Now, until the last few words I had no suspicion what this talk was leading to. Before I could stop him Johnson added:

"It was the present Mr. Borrowdale's grandfather who had this dreadful stepson. Did I tell you about the signs in red he used to make?"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SIGN AGAIN.

OLD Johnson had fascinated me, but I clung fast to my position that it was very bad business to get family secrets in an underhand way. I was about to stop him when young Johnson appeared and shouted heartily:

"The carriage is all ready, father. Come along, and I'll soon set you down in the village."

The older man forgot his story and went, but he had enlightened me greatly. The identity of the family foe was no longer mysterious, nor the history of the signs in red. Yet, if he had died in foreign lands, it was not plain to me who was doing the recent mischief.

Having digested this information as best I could, I returned to the house. Borrowdale was talking with Mrs. Corbin. As I passed them I overheard enough to satisfy me that the master of Hereside did not intend to relax his caution, and the housekeeper commended his stand, but she acted her usual part of consoler by saying:

"It seems possible to me, sir, that this freedom from trouble for so long may indicate that the gang have gone away from this section."

"Oh! no, no!" cried Borrowdale. "Don't get that notion into your head, my good woman. The worst is yet to come."

I was glad to hear him say that. As long as he remained in apprehension he would be alert, and as long as he was alert there was hope that we would baffle out foes.

Plainly, the scoffing "son of the sea" had not died, as Johnson believed, and the best way was to fight it out with him. I did not forget the threats in the torn letter behind the board in the old wing.

"It's good," I thought, almost buoyantly, "to know just whom we are fighting. I hope that it will fall to my lot to meet him first of all."

The following hours of darkness were a period of close watchfulness, but not of alarm. When day dawned we met at table, and nobody had a note of worry to sound. We were alive, and it was good.

The morning mail, brought by a man from town, was placed before Borrowdale as he and I lingered over our final cup of coffee. The ladies had arisen, though they remained near at hand. My companion asked me to excuse him while he ran over the three brief letters at his side. After that he tore open a newspaper in a wrapper, showing mild curiosity.

"Ah!" he said, after a glance at its head. "The Watchman, printed in the Pennsylvania town where our zinc mine is. Probably while you and I lingered here the stockholders meeting took place and the mine is sold. I confess that I am rather sorry to have missed being there, for I'm not sure the mine with its hundreds of acres is so surely valueless as has been reported. Probably it was sold for practically nothing. Oh! here's a marked article——"

His careless speech died away, and I saw him start. Then he read with his eyes in a stare and his attention absorbed. He surprised me. He and I had plenty of money for our uses, and our holdings in the Terolake mining concern had never interested us greatly. If the mine paid us fairly well, good; but if it failed totally, we cared little. Then why was it that he was so bound up in the article?

Presently he lifted his head and looked at me strangely, gravely, and with something more I could not interpret. He thrust the paper toward me.

"Read!" he directed, an odd note in his speech.

Beginning with the headlines that told only a part, I found that the succeeding matter told much. I read steadily.

"A fatal accident occurred on the north road from Glenmore to this town some time last night. The first traveler that way this morning came upon a demolished automobile, and by its side lay its supposed operator, dead. Examination showed that the car met with trouble from a defect in its machinery after which it crashed into a tree by the way.

"The identity of the man has not been learned. He was about fifty years old, slender, dark-faced, and black-haired, with a solid gold tooth at the front of his mouth, unusually pointed. His clothing was inexpensive but neat, and his hands showed that he was not accustomed to hard labor. The contents of his pockets were limited to a small knife, a half-dozen keys on a steel ring, a green match-box, and two cigars, together with twenty-odd dollars in money. Besides these things a singular object was found in a side pocket. It was a bit of rope, so curiously and scientifically knotted that it formed a hand much resembling the character used in printing, thus:

☞

"The car was from a garage in Glenmore, and a call on the telephone shows that the owner there does not know to whom he let it for the trip. The body is held subject to call from relatives.

"Later. As we go to press we learn that the deceased has been identified as Hardy Rolland, the capitalist who was expected to purchase the Terolake Zinc Mine from its present owners, but whose non-appearance, as mentioned in another column, prevented the sale. Rolland's residence is not known, nor the identity of the other men said to be interested with him in acquiring the zinc mine."

Having reached the last word I looked up to find Borrowdale's eyes fixed upon me intently, brightly, excitedly.

"Do you comprehend?" he asked eagerly.

"A little, I think," I began.

"That hand of rope—eh?"

"Do you think——"

"It cannot be chance. Rolland had something to do with operations here. The rope tells the tale."

"But I can't understand what he has had to do with us."

"Nor I, especially as the history of the knotted rope goes far back in the years, as I happen to know. Hardy Rolland engineered the attack on us here—but why?"

"Since he is dead, he will never tell——"

I have said that the women were lingering near. Now, Mrs. Corbin swooped down upon us and snatched up the paper without ceremony. Her face was quivering and white—so white that I mechanically shrank back a little. She lifted the sheet and stared at it, and, no doubt, the "hand" seemed to leap at her from the page.

"Dead!" she huskily cried. "Hardy Rolland dead! Oh! my wayward brother!"

Borrowdale rose and, leaning forward over the table, gazed at her in agitation almost equal to her own.

"What?" he exclaimed. "Your brother, Norman Corbin? No; his name was Hardy Rolland."

"It has been Hardy Rolland for five years, and—dead, did you say?"

Borrowdale looked at her white face for some time in a manner I could hardly interpret, and then he took her gently by the arm.

"My poor soul," he said feelingly, "do not grieve over this. I realize that after all you have suffered there must remain a strong vein of affection—I can see that—but you have always done more than your duty. Miami, child, pray conduct Mrs. Corbin to her room and remain with her."

In a few moments we were alone, and the master of Hereside took up speech again.

"A bad matter, Saywood! Her brother was the pest of her life, but she was over-faithful to him. He was a scalawag, and she is far better off. She will soon realize it. But to business! If Norman Corbin has been responsible for events here, why?"

"I can't see, but he wanted to buy the zinc mine——"

"Yes, but why?" he persisted. "That mine, after a short life of small returns, petered out almost wholly. It was worthless property——"

"But was it?"

"Now you get into my line of thinking!" Borrowdale cried. "Was it? I grant that the mine has been handled well, but there may be something back of it. Again, why attack me because of it?"

"I fail to see," I admitted.

"I wish I knew one thing more——"

He paused as a servant entered with a peculiar envelope in his hand.

"A telegram, sir, and said to be a cable message repeated——"

Borrowdale snatched it almost fiercely, tore it open, and began to read. Like one fascinated I watched. What was afoot now?

CHAPTER XV.

WE LEARN WHY.

GREAT relief came to Borrowdale's face as he read. Then he half looked up, hesitated, raised his gaze fully to my face, and smiled. In that smile the Borrowdale of the days before our troubles was again visible.

"Saywood," he said, "I am tempted to let you into a family secret, for it is no more than your due. Read this."

He tossed the message to me, and I quickly absorbed its few words. Dated at a place I afterward knew was on the shore of Cape Baba, in Asiatic Turkey, it was as follows:

"Grave opened. Occupant found as formerly buried. No mistake."

I scarcely heeded the signature, for Borrowdale was again speaking.

"Years ago my family had an enemy to combat. I have evasively told you there was no such foe of our own blood, which is true, but it was almost the same. My grandfather married a second wife with a child by her first marriage who was the despair and terror of my grandfather and father. The child, whose name was Carlos Patterson, became an inmate of this house.

"Omitting details for now, he was an impertinent, wayward, cruel boy, who became a wild, profligate, dissolute man, with every known vice. For many years he was supposed to be a sailor, and probably was, but I doubt if he ever sailed in an honest ship, while it is sure he was sometimes a member of pirate

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I have been thinking that word from me would benefit those who may be suffering as I was before I began taking your Swamp-Root, the great kidney, liver and bladder remedy. I am a locomotive engineer, employed on the Tyrone & Clearfield Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Three years ago I was afflicted with kidney and bladder trouble so bad that I was compelled to lay off duty from my engine and was in the care of two doctors. However their medicine did not benefit me. One day, I noticed your advertisement, to send name and address for a sample bottle of Swamp-Root. At this time my trouble had reached a serious stage. I sent for the sample bottle and in three days received a small bottle of Swamp-Root, which I took according to directions, and by the time I had taken the contents, I could pass water more freely. I was so pleased with my experiment that I sent my wife to the drug store of W. H. Milick, Phillipsburg, Pa., and secured a one-dollar bottle. I continued taking Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root until I was entirely cured. Now whenever I feel any pain or soreness after being exposed to bad weather or hard work, I take a dose or two of Swamp-Root. I cannot recommend this remedy too highly, especially to brother engineers who are more or less troubled with their kidneys (more than any other class of men.)

Yours truly
T. J. VAN SCOYOC.
1206 Lincoln Ave., Tyrone, Pa.

State of Pennsylvania }
County of Blair } ss.

Personally appeared before me, a Notary Public, T. J. VanScoyoc, who being duly sworn, doth depose and say that the foregoing statement is true. Sworn and subscribed to before me this 15th day of July, A. D., 1909.

H. B. CALDEWOOD,
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crews and generally given to crime.

"When, as he occasionally did, he came back here, he freely bullied everybody and made dark threats. Also, he had a habit of marking signs in red like those you have seen all about the premises, using red chalk, or something like it, which he brought from abroad. Again, he would take slender cords and cunningly shape them into the semblance of so-called 'hands.' I think he originally did these things only for amusement.

"It was after my grandfather died that his malignant nature fully developed. Finding that he had no mention in the will, he hated my father bitterly, assuming that he was responsible, and definitely declaring he would sometime kill him.

"Poor father! He was not only burdened by Patterson's occasional returns, but by letters in which he repeated his threats, with an oft-recurring statement that he would come again—that was his expression.

"To cut this short, he was finally supposed to die about fifteen years ago on Cape Baba, and, as chance would have it, an old friend of father's—then and now in Turkey—saw his body and witnessed its burial.

"That he was dead never was questioned until this late reign of terror began. Then the red signs and the knotted ropes frightened me horribly. Was Carlos Patterson really alive and about to murder my child and the rest of us? I cabled to my old friend, and there is his reply. While we cannot be absolutely sure after so long, we can rather safely believe that the body in the grave is that of the man my friend saw buried there, and that Carlos is dead."

The speaker fell silent, toying thoughtfully with the message.

"But," said I, "in that case how about the red signs and the rope appearing here?"

"That is easily explained, I think. Carlos had only one admirer here, and that was the brother of Mrs. Corbin, one Norman Wedlaw, commonly called Norman Corbin. He, too, was wayward and often hung about Carlos, and though he probably never went to an extreme in crime, his record was bad, very bad, as far as cheating, embezzlement, and the like are concerned. Norman knew the ways of Carlos well, and I'm sure it will be found that he engineered this reign of terror. He would know what effect the signs in red and the knotted rope would have upon me."

"But why? Can it have been to keep you away from the Terolake Zinc Company's plant?"

"Saywood, you know that, for ten years, I was in Pennsylvania, and I learned one thing well. When I was a poor man I could command a good salary as an expert in the coal business, both as to its practical workings and general surface indications."

"True," I agreed, and he went on earnestly.

"The zinc mine is near the coal fields—comparatively near. I'm going to send a message directing that no sale of Terolake be made until I have seen the property personally—for you know I was never there. If we have coal it means millions."

"Borrowdale, you have hit it. Norman Corbin learned of the coal, and thought to buy all for almost nothing. You were wanted at the stockholders' meeting, but he knew you were an expert in coal, and took measures to keep you away. He originated this reign of terror here, as you well call it, knowing that you would not leave home with Miss Miami in danger. After he got us well frightened he made a dash for Pennsylvania."

"And he relied upon my thinking Carlos Patterson was alive."

We were interrupted as Mrs. Corbin entered. She was still pale, but wholly composed outwardly. I noticed what a good face she had, and wondered that she could possess an evil brother.

"Sir," she began abruptly, "I have come to resign from your household."

"No, no!" he exclaimed earnestly. "I can't let you go."

"But I have sinned against you."

"If so, I will forgive in advance one who has served my family a lifetime."

"Wait, sir!" she implored, a choking sound in her voice. "It was Norman who harassed you so here."

"I realize that, Mrs. Corbin."

"I knew it all the while. Yes, but oh!" and she grew brokenly impetuous, "I did not intend any harm, nor did I realize all he would do. He told me he wanted to make sure you remained here for a while, but I did not know why. Sir, I was the slender woman who met the bogus sailor—a confederate of his—and was seen by Ober. You will notice I am as slender as even the young maids. I went to meet Norman and plead with him, but it was in vain. And, sir, he never spoke of the mine to me, never!"

"I see, Mrs. Corbin."

"Two things I have myself done. You wondered how, after the house was so well guarded, the red hand was marked on the wall in your room and the rope hand suspended from Miss Miami's chandelier. Norman had left this town with his men, but, according to a promise to him, I did these things."

"You are forgiven," said Borrowdale, kindly.

"One thing I did of my own accord. I stole the letters and rope hands from your room. They are here," and she laid them before him. "Forgive me if you can," she added. "I tried to protect wild, wicked, Norman—but my brother!"

I saw Borrowdale smile as kindly as ever, and I slipped out of the room to hear no more. The point at issue was one to be settled privately between the two.

The evil days at Hereside were past. The red signs were seen no more, and Mrs. Corbin stayed as housekeeper.

When Borrowdale went to Pennsylvania he found indications of coal, and later, the property being developed under the control of the old stockholders, it more than met our most sanguine hopes.

Norman's allies did not appear, and their identity remained a mystery. We could only surmise that the signs I found in the old hut were a side-issue of their plot, done to keep us at fault.

Analyzing the main plot later it was very simple. The chief schemer knew that if Borrowdale saw the land he would detect indications of coal, so it was necessary to keep him away from Pennsylvania. He knew of but one way, and he used it. With Miami in peril, her father would not leave home. Fully conversant with Carlos Patterson's history, he conceived the idea of giving the impression that he was still alive and about to take revenge upon the family. And he also was aware that terror lurked in the very name of that remorseless scoundrel.

The tearing up of the rooms, at the beginning, when access was easy, was probably to give the impression that family documents were wanted by the arch-schemer.

My favorite mental picture of Carlos was wholly wrong. He had been slender, but blue-eyed and fair-haired.

When matters settled down, Borrowdale again had his peaceful home. After Miami became my wife we sometimes walked in the old wing and spoke of the secret passage that was now decisively set down as being a myth, but I never mentioned a certain board that, as far as I know, still hides the torn letter of the "son of the sea" who, certainly, was now never to come again.

The End.

* * *

Leisurely Courtin'.

The recent death in a New Hampshire village of a placid, pleasant old lady, afflicted with very few infirmities at 97, has recalled anew the story of her courtship, which the villagers delight to tell.

As a girl, she was very pretty, and had several suitors. It gradually became evident that she especially favored a certain Joshua. The others, one after another, withdrew, and left him a clear field, and there seemed nothing to hinder the happy conclusion of his wooing. He was, however—like the fair Diantha—of a leisurely disposition.

It was two years before he proposed, and was accepted. Everybody expected the wedding to follow soon; all the relatives approved, there was plenty of money, and each owned a house and land. But it was five years later when a farm helper overheard Joshua, invited to appraise the apple crop of his bride-to-be, digress from business a moment at the orchard gate.

"Dianthy," he inquired, mildly, "when be ye goin' to marry me?"

"Land, Joshuay," was the reply, "if I'd known you was goin' to spring upsettin' questions, I wouldn't have ast ye over. Don't ye know a girl can't be hurried? Let's talk apples."

"No hurry, no hurry, Dianthy; take your time," agreed Joshua, amiably. "We're both comf'table as we be. Only folks seem to be kind of expectin' us to hitch before the season's out, and I didn't know's we'd ought to disapp'int 'em."

It was another five years before Joshua—whether of his own motion or under pressure of public opinion—repeated his question. Then he was put off on the plea that Diantha must "get her things ready."

She was several years about that; then the deaths of various uncles and aunts deferred the wedding for several more. After all was ready, it took six years for the lovers to decide whether they should live in his house or hers; then three years were required to dispose of the house to be vacated. Altogether, it took them a quarter of a century to get married.

They were very happy, however, and Diantha, after she was left a widow, never wearied of eulogizing her departed consort.

"Joshuay wa'n't what you'd call a driver,' she would sigh, reminiscently, "but then, Providence had so fur provided for us that he had no call to be; and if he was slow-going, there never was a man more comfortable to go along with."

* * *

Announcing Them.

A maiden lady, Miss Cocker by name, and her niece, who bears the same cognomen, went one evening to a reception at the house of a friend. "What name please?" inquired the footman.

"Miss Cocker," answered the elder lady.

"Miss Cocker, too," joined the niece, [illegible].

Whereupon the man of plush and buttons opened the drawingroom door and, with all the dignity of his profession, ushered them into the midst of the company with this convulsing announcement:

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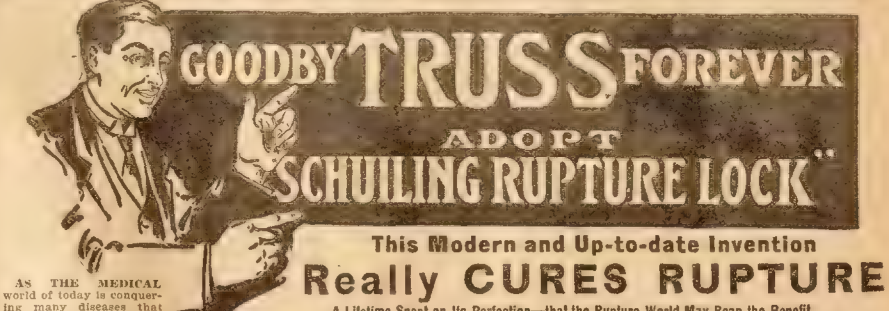

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THE MANY YEARS of hard study and labor to bring about the production of this Rupture Lock was done for your sake, that you as a rupture sufferer might go about your daily task, free from annoyance, pain and inconvenience from this terrible affliction and to produce a thorough and lasting cure, and that it has succeeded is proven by the thousands of contented and cured patients everywhere.

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THIS RUPTURE LOCK has no springs, no nasty [illegible] straps, no elastic bands, no steel bands that encircle you like a hoop on a barrel. Such contraptions are injurious and in many cases positively dangerous to health and future welfare. This Lock is absolutely free in action and avoids any acute pressure on the pubic bone, hips or spine, but holds the ruptured parts with that direct, steady and soothing pressure that is so essential to promote a speedy and lasting cure.

OUR BOOK ON RUPTURE explains in full detail all the important and wonderful features of this truly MARVEL of the twentieth century. SENT FREE BY RETURN MAIL.

THIS RUPTURE LOCK will save you an operation, it will save you pain and torture from ill-fitting, worthless trusses, it will protect you from the dangers of strangulation, it will make you a new man or new woman, thanking the day we stepped into your life with this wonderful invention—in fact it will cure you to stay cured.

THE SCHUILING RUPTURE LOCK WILL BE SENT YOU ON 30 DAYS FREE TRIAL. A thirty day free trial, which is ample time to prove that it is all and more than is claimed for it. That is the proper way to buy it, you must have a reasonable length of time to test it for your own satisfaction. We know what it will do, and you do not until you have tried it out for thirty days, then you will know its wonderful merits, as thousands of others know it today.

DON'T FAIL TO WRITE FOR OUR FREE BOOK ON RUPTURE AT ONCE, for it will direct you right; it tells you straight, honest facts, and it should be the means of shaping your entire future career.

SCHUILING RUPTURE INSTITUTE
105 W. Market St., Indianapolis, Ind.

Send me your free book "How to Cure Rupture."

Name ....

City ....

State ....

Read What a Minister of the Gospel Writes Us

Creedmoor, N. C., July 28, 1913.

Gentlemen:

I have worn your rupture lock but five months, and find that the openings are now closed tightly. To say that your rupture lock is the world's greatest invention for ruptured people is not putting it any too strong, for I was afflicted with double rupture for many years, suffering intensely all the time; was unable to find anything that would hold me, and all proved as torturous as the rupture itself, until your lock was tried, when I felt like a new man the minute it was put on, and enjoyed perfect comfort all the time I wore it. I am a Baptist minister, and am well known in this community. You are welcome to use my name in any way you think best.

I pray the Lord to give you a long life, to be a help to suffering humanity. Sincerely yours,

Z. W. WHEELERS.

No Evidence Could be Stronger, 81 Years Old and Cured

Columbus, Ind., June 2, 1913.

To whom it may concern:

I procured a Schuiling Rupture Lock four months ago, and now find I am entirely cured. I had very large and painful double rupture which caused me untold suffering for many years. They were as large as two fists. Never could find anything that would even hold them up for 10 minutes at a time, until I put on the Schuiling Rupture Lock, which held them at once and perfectly.

I am 81 years of age and never expected a cure at my age, all I asked was to be properly held; but to my happy surprise the openings closed tightly and firmly. I will gladly answer all who write me. Yours truly,

JOHN SHINNERER.

SCHUILING RUPTURE INSTITUTE, 105 W. Market St., INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

The Rascal.

"Tom is nothing but a heartless flirt."
"What do you mean?"
"Why, after I've refused him only six times, he is making love to another girl."

HORRORS!

The paving man had too much drink,
  And husky was his talk:
Said he: "I'm seeing things, I think;
Look at that gravel walk!"

WILLIE LEAVES THE FARM

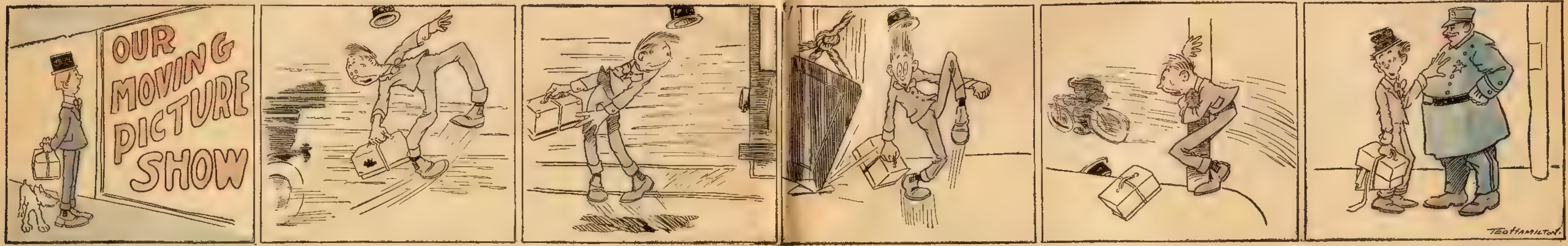
NO DIFFERENCE.

Girls will be girls, make no mistake,
  They're all alike in life,
It takes a pensive maid to make
  A real expensive wife.

Following Precedent.

Westend—"Why is it that a man always has to wait for a woman?"

Eastend—"Did not Adam have to wait until Eve was made up?"—Judge.



"Gosh! I must see that! I just have to git some excitement or bust! The old home place is dead as a mummy! It's me for the hustling city——

"Gol-darn-amighty! that blamed automobile just missed me! These moneyed cusses don't seem to have no manners! If I only had our ole shotgun I'd——

"Wow-ee! Why in samhill don't they let a feller know they're comin'? That rotten street car just grazed me!——

"Sufferin' snakes! if that gosh-dinged safe didn't amost fall onto me! If it had hit me there wouldn't have been grease enough left to make me into gravy!——

"Drat that imp of the devil! I've run two blocks to git out of his way and he almost got me! Seems to me the quiet country would be a sweet and pleasant place!——

"Say, Mr. Policeman, which is the quickest way to get to the depot! I want to git home to mother! This ain't no fit place to live in, and I'd ruther die in the country, anyhow!"

A Modern Poor Richard.

Father—"This is a fine house you've bought. I don't see how you raised the money."

Son—"I'm buying it on the installment plan."

"Oh! But where did you get all the handsome furniture?"

"Buying that on the installment plan, too."

"Hm! Must cost something. I don't see how you can spare so much for clothes. Your wife dresses like a princess."

"Yes, get our clothes on the installment plan."

"Won't do, won't do at all. Suppose you should die?"

"I can be buried on the installment plan easily enough."

"But your wife won't have any money to pay the installments."

"Yes, she'll have plenty. I'm insured on the installment plan—pay every week."

❧

Not to Be Believed.

Parishioner (to departing minister)—"We're all very sorry to lose you, Mr. Foodle."

Rev. Foodle (modestly)—"Never mind, Mrs. Toodle. I've no doubt you will get a better man next time."

Parishioner—"Ah, no, Mr. Foodle! That's just what the last minister said when he left."

❧

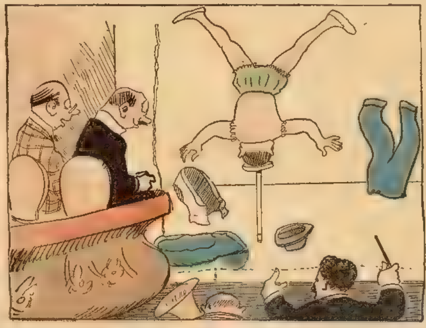
Something Surprising.

Manager—"Yes, I want a new play, but I want something novel, something startling, something never seen or heard of before."

Author—"I've got it; just the thing. The plot leads up to a train robbery."

"Nothing new about that."

"Yes, there is. The passengers rise as one man, and smash the robbers."



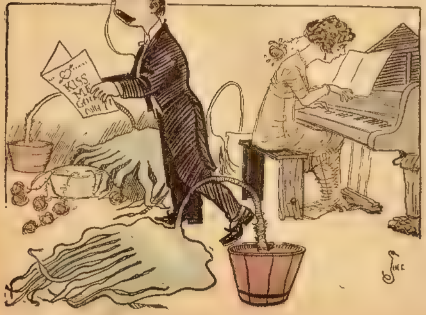
Mr. Prinkle—"Gee! That's a great acrobat! See that fellow undress clean down to his tights while he stands on his head!"

Mr. Twinkle—"That's nothing to a man who can undress in an upper sleeping car berth."

Willing to Aid.

Tramp—"Please, mum, I ain't had a full stummick fer three weeks."

Housekeeper (benevolently)—"Too bad! Well, you go somewhere and beg a meal of dried apples and I will furnish the water."



From a Daily Newspaper—"Scientists are experimenting to discover whether plants can feel pain."

On the Highway.

"Hear about Weary Waffles?"

"Naw. Wot you heard?"

"Heard he was up against it las' week. Say, you know wot an aristocrat Weary is? Never lifts a hand to help hisself. Takes his handouts an' eats 'em an' plugs along. Never teched a saw or an ax in all his born days. You know he won't carry wood or water. Naw, he was born to be waited on."

"Wot happened?"

"Feller took him into an eatin' house to fill him up wit' a square meal."

"Well?"

"An' Weary never seen, till he wuz inside, dat de place wuz a serve yourself!"

❧

Better Than Expected.

"My fiancee is such a noble man!" sighed the plain Miss Elder-Roxe.

"He must be," murmured her dear friend sympathetically."

"He is so disinterested, so generous," went on the engaged-at-last one, not noticing the sarcasm. "I am sure he loves me for myself alone. The other evening I confessed to him that I wore a switch and some false curls. I held my breath when I had told him my secret, but he did not wince. He kissed me fondly and seemed delighted at my confidence."

"Yes, he should be delighted. He probably thought you wore a wig."

❧

Giving Him a Tip.

He (at 11:30 p. m.)—"Can I never get you to say 'yes?'"

She (stifling a yawn)—"That depends on your question. Try asking me if I am sleepy."

❧

Correct.

Teacher—"Willie, can you name the chief products of Mexico?"

Willie—"Yes'm. Trouble."

A Specimen Egg.

A little girl who had a live bantam presented to her was disappointed at the smallness of the first egg laid by the bird. Her ideal egg was that of the ostrich, a specimen of which was on the table in the parlor. One day the ostrich egg was missing from its accustomed place. It was subsequently found near the spot where the bantam nested, and on it was stuck a piece of paper with the words:

"Something like this, please. Keep on trying."

❧

His Mistake.

"What's the matter?"

"I'm in disgrace with my wife."

"What about?"

"She sent me downtown to match some hair. I got some like the saleslady's. I thought it was prettier."

❧

A Literary Feast.

"I want to feed on literature. What authors would you recommend to give me a literary appetite?"

"I think, if I were you, I would begin with Hogg, Lamb, and Bacon."

Shy.

Purchaser—"And will he scare at anything?"

Farmer—"M' friend, this hoss is jist afraid of two things: That he won't get enough to eat, an' that he won't hear when I say, 'Whoa!'"—Judge.

❧

Not Suited.

"I am afraid your friend will not care for a glass of water here."

"Why not, since he is thirsty?"

"Because this is soft water, and I understand he is a hard drinker."

A Difference.

A professor from Iowa went to England last summer and was introduced to a professor from one of the English universities. He welcomed the American and said:

"I met one of your colleagues last summer. We had another professor from Ohio here to visit us."

"But I am from Iowa."

"Iowa, indeed! How very interesting! I am sure the other gentleman called it Ohio."

❧

An Improving Influence.

"You have a new cook."

"Yes," replied Mr. Crosslots.

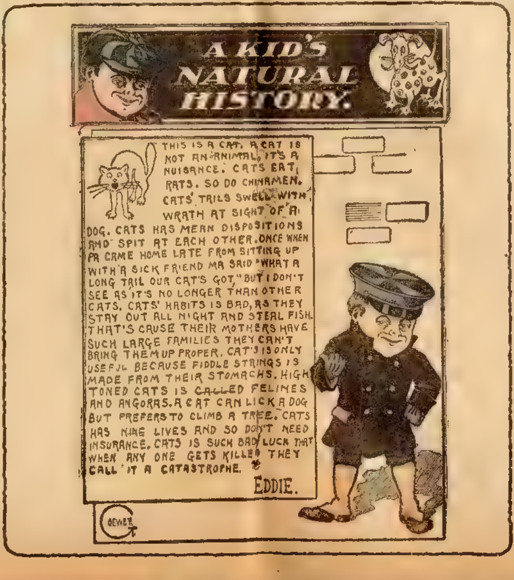
"Is she doing good work?"

"Yes. She can't cook very much, but she served notice that she wouldn't stay if my daughter didn't quit playing ragtime on the piano."

❧

TO A MUMMY.

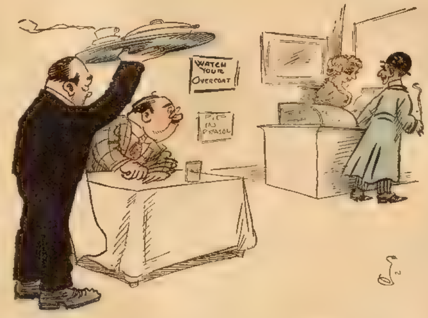
Oh, solemn, mysterious mummy,
Just now you don't seem very chummy
  But in life you'd a part,
  There was love in your heart,
And, doubtless, a pain in your tummy!



A KID'S NATURAL HISTORY.

THIS IS A CAT. A CAT IS NOT AN ANIMAL, IT'S A NUISANCE. CATS EAT RATS. SO DO CHINAMEN. CATS' TAILS SWELL WITH WRATH AT SIGHT OF A DOG. CATS HAS MEAN DISPOSITIONS AND SPIT AT EACH OTHER. ONCE WHEN PA CAME HOME LATE FROM SITTING UP WITH A SICK FRIEND MA SAID "WHAT A LONG TAIL OUR CAT'S GOT," BUT I DON'T SEE AS IT'S NO LONGER THAN OTHER CATS. CATS' HABITS IS BAD, AS THEY STAY OUT ALL NIGHT AND STEAL FISH. THAT'S CAUSE THEIR MOTHERS HAVE SUCH LARGE FAMILIES THEY CAN'T BRING THEM UP PROPER. CAT'S IS ONLY USEFUL BECAUSE FIDDLE STRINGS IS MADE FROM THEIR STOMACHS. HIGH TONED CATS IS CALLED FELINES AND ANGORAS. A CAT CAN LICK A DOG BUT PREFERS TO CLIMB A TREE. CATS HAS NINE LIVES AND SO DON'T NEED INSURANCE. CATS IS SUCH BAD LUCK THAT WHEN ANY ONE GETS KILLED THEY CALL IT A CATASTROPHE.

EDDIE.



Waiter—"That man there has been eating here for five years."
Guest—"Who sentenced him?"

Circumstantial Evidence.

"You say you met the defendant on a street car, and that he had been drinking and gambling," said the attorney for the defense, during the cross-examination.

"Yes," replied the witness.

"Did you see him take a drink?"

"No."

"Did you see him gambling?"

"No."

"Then how do you know," demanded the attorney, "that the defendant had been drinking and gambling?"

"Well," explained the witness, "he gave the conductor a blue chip for his car fare, and told him to keep the change."

❧

Mathematics and Money.

Husband—"According to your own figures you spent over one hundred dollars this year in cheap fripperies, which had to be thrown away after once wearing. That one hundred dollars would have bought a piece of lace that would have lasted a lifetime—in fact, could be used by your descendants for generations."

Wife—"Well, give me one hundred dollars and I will buy the lace for next year."

Husband—"I'm—never mind; I—I don't think lace is very becoming to your style of beauty. Here's ten cents for another ruffle."

❧

Where Pride Fails.

"Wealth is very haughty and overbearing in this country."

"Not always. Did you ever watch the owner of a sixty-horsepower automobile trying to square himself with a bicycle policeman?"

❧

Didn't Want Any.

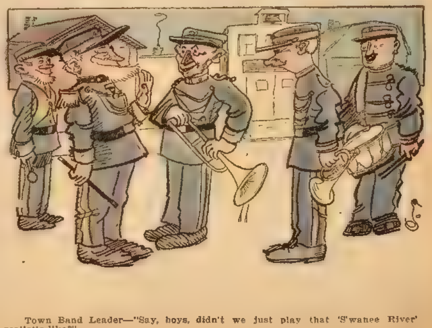
Her Partner—"If you are tired of dancing, Mrs. Newrocks, we'll sit down and have a little tete-a-tete, shall we?"

Mrs. Newrocks—"Oh, dear me, no, thanks. After such a big supper I really couldn't eat another thing."

Nothing Made in Vain.

Housekeeper—"It's perfectly abominable! Why don't you go to work and earn your living?"

Tramp—"Please, mum, if such gents as me should go to work, what would the newspaper paragraphers do for subjects to write about? They'd starve to death, mum, and, with no jokes in the papers, this dreary life would be but a vale of tears. We all have our uses, mum."



Town Band Leader—"Say, boys, didn't we just play that 'S'wanee River' realistic like?"

Trombonist—"Gosh, yes; why, I could hear the water 'swishin' in ol' Si's cornet."

An Economical Handbag.

"I want you to see my lovely new shopping bag," said a certain lady to a caller the other afternoon. "My husband gave it to me for my birthday, and it's simply grand. And it's so economical! You see, you open this and there are two compartments, and you open the compartment on this side and there is a little pocket in that, and you open the little pocket, and there is a cute little pocketbook for change, with one side partitioned off for street-car tickets."

"I see," said the caller. "But why do you call it economical?"

"Why, it takes so long to open all the compartments and get to your street-car tickets that by the time you do whoever's with you has paid your fare."

❧

Not a Romance.

Mr. Farwest—"I met my old schoolmate, Lakeside, today, for the first time in an age, and I thought from the way he acted when I mentioned you that you and he must have had some romance or other before we met."

Mrs. Farwest—"No romance about it. We were married for a few years, that's all."

❧

Nature Does Very Well.

Philosopher—"People talk about the wise provisions of nature, and yet no sooner does man become a brain worker than he loses his teeth."

His Wife—"Goodness me! Nature knows that when people begin to use their brains, they will have sense enough to go to the dentist's."

❧

Quite Right.

Small Edgar was looking out at the falling snowflakes and, turning to his father, said: "Papa, I can remember the year when we didn't have any snow."

"When was that, Edgar?" asked his father.

"Why, last summer," was the reply.

The Cabalistic Hand

Or, TELLTALE FINGERPRINTS

By George Ethelbert Walsh

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Begun in No. 52, December 27. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication

CHAPTER XXIV.

MAXINE was in a state of almost-total collapse, and I was no better, when the doorbell rang, and a moment later the servant announced Inspector McGonigle. For the sake of appearances we had to pull ourselves together and conceal this terrible revelation from alien eyes. Maxine passed a trembling hand across his wet brow, and said hoarsely:

"Nothing more of this sort for the present, Montague. Pull yourself together. Take some brandy."

I took a stiff bracer, and Maxine followed suit, and when the Inspector appeared we were measurably calm on the surface, but with fast-beating pulses and heart underneath.

"I've brought you the Jap, Mr. Maxine," the Inspector announced triumphantly. "Here he is!"

Meteso entered the room immediately after the Inspector, carefully handcuffed and guarded by an officer.

"Didn't have much trouble in finding him after your description," McGonigle continued. "He objected to coming at first, but a little persuasion changed his mind. Now, what do you want of him? Any charge against him?"

Maxine and I were studying the Jap closely. On inspection he did not appear formidable; he was considerably frightened, but with Oriental stoicism he concealed it well. He looked at Maxine and inclined his head

"You want me for stealing—"

"Never mind what I want," sharply retorted Maxine. Then, turning to McGonigle, he added: "Inspector, you've done me a great service in bringing Meteso here, and I'll not forget it; but I want you to do me one other favor."

The Inspector looked inquiringly at him.

"I want you to leave Meteso alone with me," Maxine said softly, with a winning smile. "This is a little personal matter between us I think I can handle it better alone."

The Inspector's face showed disappointment, but he replied after a pause:

"Just as you say, Mr. Maxine, but I hoped you'd let me into the secret. If Meteso has committed any crime——"

"I don't accuse him of any, but if he has, I'll turn him over to you later, and you can take all the credit of apprehending him."

Although still showing his disappointment, McGonigle bowed, and after a few more words withdrew with his man.

When the outer door had closed behind him, Maxine turned to the Jap and surveyed him from head to foot in silence. I, too, measured him physically and mentally; he was certainly a repulsive individual, but there was no indication of any of the great mental powers we had credited him with

"Meteso," Maxine asked abruptly, "why did you steal that snake from Mr. Philip Fraser's apartments and put it in a bomb and seal it up with wax?"

The Jap started at this direct query and stared blankly at his questioner. Then a slow, cunning smile disfigured his face; he did not answer, but shrugged his shoulders.

"Why did you do it, Meteso?"

The Jap's smile faded from his lips, and he cleared his throat to speak.

"Why you ask me that?" he responded.

"Why do I ask you that? Because I want to know the reason."

Then, to our surprise and wonderment, the wily Jap answered, with another shrug of the shoulders:

"You ask foolish question. You know!"

Maxine stared at him as if unable to interpret the answer.

"I know?" he repeated. "What do you mean?"

"You ask me to steal it and put it in the bomb," was the astonishing answer.

Maxine breathed hard and I could see he was laboring to control his emotions.

"I asked you?" he replied. "When did I ever meet you before?"

The Jap looked more surprised than we, and for a moment a crafty silence possessed him. He shrugged his shoulders and looked anxiously around the room

"Will you explain, or must I force you?" cried Maxine, menacingly springing forward and jerking Meteso around.

"You make fool of me," was the surly answer. "You know, and I no answer."

Maxine and I stared in blank surprise at the imperturbable Jap, and neither spoke for some moments

"Meteso," Maxine said finally, in a persuasive voice. "I want you to tell this gentleman all you know. Never mind me; tell the story as you know it."

Meteso turned and looked wearily at me.

"I think it a joke," he said, and smiled.

"No, it's no joke," replied Maxine. "He wants to know all about it."

"What's your business, Meteso?" I asked, hoping to quiet his suspicions.

"My business?" he queried. "I make many things—cunning landscape gardens, flowers and plants that look like real, and many things.

"And bombs," retorted Maxine

"I make bomb for you and put snake in it. You say you want it for surprise of friend. I not know what you do with it. I steal snake for you, and put him in it. Then I make plant for you with little bulbs filled with poison."

"You made that, too?" gasped Maxine.

Meteso nodded. "Then I get frightened," he added. "I think you kill somebody with it, and I come here and steal it. I creep up to window, and try to take it away, but you discover me and chase. I get away, but you good runner and wrestler. You make fine wrestler. I give you lessons, if say so. I no like this business. I get in prison."

The simple tale of the man held us in wondering silence. We were too surprised to interrupt. Maxine's face had grown a pasty white, and his hands trembled.

"When did I meet you before, Meteso?" he asked, controlling himself with an effort.

"You meet me—often at night. You come to my place, and say you pay me well to make bomb and artificial plant. I need the money, and I make them."

"And I asked you to steal the snake from Mr. Fraser's?"

"You say so. I tell you he afraid of snake and glad to get rid of it. You tell me to get it, and I go and steal it. I no thief, but Mr. Fraser no like the snake, and I want it!"

Instead of a cunning criminal, it gradually dawned upon us that Meteso was simply a shrewd, ingenious representative of his race, and in some mysterious way he had been drawn into this inexplicable mystery.

"Meteso," Maxine said finally, "I want you to hold this piece of putty a moment, and squeeze it for me."

The Jap shrank back and held his hands behind him, while cunning fear crept into his eyes.

"It's a trick, I think. I no like tricks."

"No, it's no trick. The putty is harmless. See, I will squeeze and mold it."

Maxine rolled and patted the soft piece of putty in his hands, and finally handed it to the Jap. Meteso took it and looked suspiciously from one to the other. Maxine suddenly seized his hand and squeezed it so that the fingers sunk deep into the yielding mass.

"That is all Meteso," he said with a smile. "Hand it to me."

Maxine took the lump and looked at the fingerprints left in the putty. He stood a moment in silent thought, and then dropped the putty to the desk.

"They're not the same, Montague," he groaned. "Meteso is not the man."

The Jap stared at us, wondering what sort of a trick we were playing. After a moment of hesitation, Maxine once more took him in hand and began a series of searching questions. He literally dragged from the unwilling lips of the Jap the whole story of the bomb and poisoned plant.

In substance it was merely a repetition of what I have already described. Maxine had come to him in his little shop, and had several conversations with him. In one of these Meteso had told him of the fer-de-lance he had seen at Mr. Fraser's apartment. Maxine had then proposed that he make a bomb and insert the snake in it. He wanted to play a joke on a friend, and would pay the Jap well for his work

Several days after receiving the bomb, Maxine had returned with another proposition. He wanted a tuberous plant, with a few artificial bulbs attached, filled with a poison he provided. At first Meteso had balked at this, but finally agreed to the request for the sake of the money offered. Later he had repented of his deed, fearful lest it might get him in trouble with the police, and had made the successful attempt to steal the plant from Maxine's office

There were many little details which convinced us of his truthfulness. Maxine labored under a terrific strain all the time he was questioning Meteso, and when through he looked as if ready to collapse.

"That is all, Meteso," he said finally, in a hollow voice. "You can go back to your shop now. The police will not bother you. I may want to talk with you again, but no harm will come of it. You're free."

Meteso drew a long breath of relief.

"You not arrest me again?" he queried. "I go free, and can stay in city?"

"Yes, you can go where you like."

Meteso withdrew after many protestations of gratitude, and with much ceremonious bowing. When the door closed behind him, Maxine dropped heavily into his chair.

"Montague, what does it all mean?" he asked helplessly.

"We must have followed the wrong clew again," I answered inanely, taking another chair, which I dropped into almost as heavily as Maxine.

"Yes, the wrong clew—but the murderer! Who is he? Am I the murderer, Montague?"

I shuddered at the light in his eyes.

"Of course not, Maxine. How could you be?"

"But those fingerprints! They are mine—every one of them, and I—I placed the bomb in Miss Dorothy's room and the fake plant in the cellar. I must have made that print on the bloody rag in the cellar. My God, Montague! I'm a murderer—in my sleep!"

I got up and placed a hand on his shoulders. The truth was beginning to dawn on my mind. Maxine was a som-

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ambulist, and in his sleep he had performed things he knew nothing about in his waking moments.

"Maxine," I said softly, "were you asleep last night when you went through that abandoned tunnel to the Seldon house?"

"What tunnel, Montague?" he asked wonderingly.

My heart gave a little drop at these words, and then I gently told him the story of my adventures the previous night. He listened in silence.

"Do you remember anything about it?" I asked at the end.

"No," he replied sadly. "I remember nothing, Montague. It sounds like a dream. Then there is a secret entrance to the cellar?"

"Yes," I answered, "and I can find it again."

"Then that explains the marks we found in the cellar, and the presence of the plant there. I must have visited the place in my sleep."

"It's most remarkable, Maxine," I said "But it must be true—if you remember nothing."

"I remember nothing, Montague," he whispered.

He flung himself in his seat and picked up the accusing fingerprints and studied them once more. He repeatedly took impressions of his own and compared them with the others They were identically the same.

Suddenly he laughed harshly and insanely, a queer light in his feverish eyes. I started at the sound

"I always said the owner of those fingerprints was the criminal," he murmured. "They're remarkable prints, Montague, and the owner of them is a genius—cruel, crafty, and determined. I told you when I first analyzed them that he might not necessarily be a criminal at heart. Circumstances might have switched him from the straight path of duty late in life. Perhaps it was restlessness or a desire to show that he could defy all the detectives in the world. My theory still holds true, Montague. I'm the criminal! I'm the master rogue! I'm the man who committed the trunk outrage! Ha! ha! Montague, I've traced the last clew! I've found the only man who could baffle me. Yes, he baffled me for a long time, but now I've run him to ground

He rose from his seat and paced the floor in agitation

"No, no, Maxine," I protested, "you're not a criminal!"

He swung around and faced me

"You know that I am, Montague," he cried harshly, "and I'm going to pay the penalty of my crime, whether I did it in my sleep or in my waking moments I'm responsible. I'll surrender myself at once. Think of the trouble I'll have in convincing Inspector McGonigle that I'm the guilty man! Imagine his expression, Montague!

He laughed so harshly and thickly that I shuddered. I could not bear to hear him accusing himself, and yet a terrible load burdened down my spirits and made me a poor comforter.

"No crime has been committed, Maxine," I said stubbornly. "Nothing happened, even if the imprisoned snake was found in Miss Seldon's room, and the poisoned plant and pencil——"

"You forget the trunk murder, Montague. There was a crime, and I committed it!"

I was dumb. Until that mystery was cleared up, I could not look upon Maxine other than the perpetrator of that murder. He was his own accuser.

CHAPTER XXV.

MAXINE would have sent for Inspector McGonigle and confessed everything if I had not persuaded him to wait a few days until we could go over the whole series of events that had led up to the tragic denouement. Step by step we picked up the threads of the mysterious case. They could be explained only on the hypothesis that he had walked in his sleep, and while in his somnambulistic condition he had committed the overt acts. But even with the liveliest stretch of the imagination it was difficult to accept this theory.

It was well that we deferred the visit to headquarters, for an unexpected confession brought about a new complication. The tragedy of the trunk murder was revealed in all its details by the maid who had first discovered the body of the woman in the trunk

Mary Shaw, the maid, after recovering from a severe illness induced by the tragedy, confessed that she knew the mysterious woman found dead in the trunk. Moreover, she knew the secret of the tragedy

The woman, a friend of hers, had visited the Seldon home when in trouble, and had asked for shelter for a few days until she could leave the city for the West, where she had relatives who would care for her. Mary had befriended her before, and, unknown to the rest of the servants, she provided her with a bed and food in the basement. There she had stayed for nearly a week.

One day when Mary was sent to the basement with the keys of the trunks to get out things stored in them, the two were surprised by Parks, the butler, who appeared at the head of the stairs There had been some talk of cleaning out the basement storeroom, and Parks was accompanied by a man hired to do the work. The sudden appearance of the two startled and frightened the maid and her friend.

To escape detection the woman had climbed into the trunk, and Mary had closed the lid and locked it. Carrying the key with her, she returned upstairs, and busied herself with her routine duties. She dared not enter the basement to release her friend while the man was working down there.

When she finally had a chance to go back, she unlocked the trunk and threw the lid open; but her friend, confined for so long in such close quarters, had been smothered to death. The shock of finding the dead body in the trunk caused her to scream and then faint.

For nearly two weeks she had been delirious and unable to make an explanation. As soon as she could tell her story coherently she made a clean breast of it. The police had held her under surveillance in the hospital during her illness, and to them she told the story of the suspected murder.

When Maxine learned the details of this confession a great weight was lifted from his shoulders. He had grown thin and haggard under the terrific strain The thought that he had committed murder while walking in his sleep had nearly wrecked his mind; but now he braced up and smiled wanly at me

"That relieves me of all actual crime Montague," he said. "For that I'm thankful. The rest doesn't matter so much, except that I shall never feel safe again. I may walk in my sleep any night, and I may not stop short of crime this time."

"I don't think you could actually commit a crime, Maxine," I replied, "either when you were asleep or awake"

"The mystery of it is beyond me," he replied

Every night I spent a sleepless vigil in watching him while he slept, but he showed no disposition to somnambulism There had been no such tendency in his life before, nor in any of his family Somnambulism as an explanation of the mystery was growing less tenable every day. I never permitted him out of my sight. We lived and slept in the same room, with doors and windows locked I even devised a scheme of locking a pair of handcuffs to our wrists to make sure that nothing could happen

A week after the maid's confession which cleared Maxine of the crime, we were sitting quietly in the office. Maxine was reclining in his easy chair, and for a long time neither had spoken. With eyes half closed, a dreamy expression spread over his face. I did not disturb him, but kept myself busy with my writing

Suddenly there was a quick start, and Maxine sat up in his chair When I glanced at him I was shocked by the glare in his face and the white, drawn lips. They were curled over the teeth as if ready to snarl. He sat there in a strained attitude for a moment, and then to my surprise and horror I heard the growl and laugh which had so frightened me before. They came from Maxine's lips, and they were followed a moment later by a soft, self-satisfied chuckle that frightened me even more than the laugh and cry. I sprang to my feet and caught his arm.

"What is it, Maxine?" I gasped. "For God's sake what's the matter?

He tried to shake my hand loose, and even turned on me with another snarl; but I retained my hold and pushed him back in the chair. I shook him and cried:

"Wake up, Maxine! Wake up!"

For a moment he did not respond to my efforts but when I repeated them many times he finally yielded and dropped back with a sigh. Gradually the muscles relaxed and the eyes assumed their normal aspect.

"What is it Montague?" he asked weakly

"You slept, sir," I replied.

"No, I wasn't asleep," he replied "I was deep in thought. I was trying to fathom the mystery of all this trouble, Montague. I seemed to see things that I'd forgotten. I believe I——"

He rubbed his eyes and turned to me.

"What did I do, Montague?

When I explained everything he opened his eyes wider and looked skeptically at me.

"Either you or I have been dreaming," he said slowly "I'm sure I didn't sleep Are you sure you were awake?"

"I was never wider awake," I replied emphatically. "I was writing a letter when you started up and looked

"How did I look, Montague"

"Why, sir, I can't explain it It was as if you were hypnotized, and then that growl and laugh escaped your lips. It was the same that I heard several times before and thought was Meteso's.'

Maxine glanced from me to the chair in which he had been reclining, and thoughtfully stroked his chin

"I looked as if I was hypnotized?" he said quietly. "There was no one here to hypnotize me, Montague."

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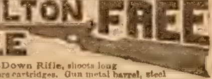

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"No, sir, there was not. I was the only one in the office."

"I was thinking—very deeply," he murmured to himself. "Perhaps I was so abstracted that my mind wandered. I was conscious of no strange actions. Yet I seemed to see and hear things—Montague, were you ever hypnotized?"

"No, sir, I don't believe in it. I never permitted any one to try it on me."

"There is a good deal in it, Montague. A man may see and feel things when hypnotized that are denied him when he is in his normal mind. Sometimes I've obtained confessions from criminals when in that state that I could not extract in any other way. I've picked up clews from them that have been of invaluable aid to me."

"Yes, sir, but you were never hypnotized?"

"No—not exactly. Yet I've permitted myself to pass off into dreams when the sumbliminal self had a chance to work better than when the conscious mind was active."

I listened without realizing the drift of his thought. He got up and slowly walked the floor, pausing occasionally to gaze at me. He frowned and bit his lip, but he made no effort to renew the conversation for several minutes. Then he stopped abruptly and faced me with a queer smile on his face.

"Montague," he said slowly, "I think I have a clew—an important one. But I cannot speak of it tonight. I'm too upset and agitated. I must think; I must be alone. Tomorrow I may tell you all or nothing."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THIS is the confession of Maxine. I give it as he set it down in writing, not trusting himself to speak of it. I betray no secret in publishing it, for it was intended for such use, and now that a reasonable time has passed and the memory of the Seldon trunk mystery is dim and hazy in the minds of all readers, there can be no harm in revealing things that had less to do with the public than with Maxine. I present it as he wrote it, because the subject is too abstruse and technical for me to handle intelligently. It has to do with things that border on the supernatural, and yet, as Maxine presents them, they are logical and natural. Perhaps some reader may be skeptical, but let me say that in the world of reality there are many things stranger and more wonderful than anything in fiction.

But I will not digress. I will present Maxine's confession as he wrote it, and let each one judge for himself. Here it is:

"Montague, I have found the key to the mystery that has involved both of us in so much trouble. I can see it all clearly in the light of the new knowledge.

"It was hypnotism, as you suggested that day when you caught me in the act of rising from my chair to perpetrate another crime to add to the long list that had troubled us. But it was self-hypnosis—a species of hypnotism self-induced through too much dwelling upon things beyond the knowledge of the normal mind.

"Perhaps I can make myself clearer by explaining some things. Mind reading, hypnotism, and mental telepathy have always been favorite studies of mine, and I have utilized all three in the prosecution of my work. The ability to read the minds of others is a rare gift, and one that can be cultivated. We cannot do this absolutely, but we can learn to approximate the truth, and by a sort of intuition interpret what is in another's mind.

"When a person is hypnotized we cannot only extract secrets from him, but we can control and direct him by suggestions, commands, and orders. The transliminal, or higher spiritual self of the person is then in the ascendency. Fortunately for society this higher self of man is by nature upright. If you can appeal to it direct you can find out the real thoughts of a man, no matter how much he may conceal them when in his normal condition. By suggestion you can, through hypnotic influence, direct and control character and actions.

"Auto-suggestion, or self-hypnosis, is another field that has attracted my attention. All inspiration comes from the inner self. Resources beyond the reach of the conscious man may be brought into play by consulting the transliminal self. I remember reading these words of a writer, who, himself a great author, had studied and practiced self-hypnosis: 'There is a mind state between sleeping and waking, when the far-seeing powers of the subjective self may be projected through the working-machine of the objective mind, the brain; and the thoughts evolved and the work performed will be of a superior quality to any that the waking consciousness itself can produce at its best.'

"Yes,' Montague, there is a state of mind extending from preoccupation and absent-mindedness through the various stages of drowsiness, stupor, somnambulism, and lethargy to hypnotism, coma, and death, and if we can interpret the thoughts and fancies that flit across the mind at such times we may learn much that may seem to many supernatural. I am guilty of self-hypnosis, Montague, but without conscious intent of doing harm. In my search for the abstract and abstruse, I have often passed from the borderland of objective to subjective consciousness. I have projected objective suggestions into the subjective, and thereby influenced my own character.

"Unconsciously I have been guilty of a wrong to myself through auto-suggestion in this way. My belief that no great criminal worthy of my skill existed became an obsession with me. I was tired of the business: the detection of crime seemed so simple that it had lost all its savor. Perhaps I had often planned in my mind what I would do to baffle the police if I was a criminal. I know I often theorized on such subjects from the criminal's point of view. Sometimes the very stupidity of criminals disgusted me.

"Gradually I built up a dual self; one, the conscious, objective self, in which I was the great detective, and the other, the subjective self, in which I began planning to outwit the normal, everyday self. In moments of great abstraction I must have drifted over the borderland, and the transliminal personality took possession of my actions. This, in other words, was hypnotism, self-induced. During such moments I performed feats that I had no consciousness of in my waking moments. I moved and worked in another world. But I had unconsciously directed this subjective nature into certain definite channels. By wishing that there was a master criminal who could baffle me in my work, I actually suggested the idea to my other self, and thereby created him.

"This theory fits well with the facts of the case. You will recall that I took only indifferent interest in the Seldon trunk murder; but I remember that when the facts were first reported I went over them carefully in my mind, and I speculated as to how a great criminal committing such a crime would act to throw the police off his trail. Instead of trying to conceal all clews, I conceived the idea that the police would be more baffled if misleading clews were scattered about. While thus speculating in a half-dreamy, half-contemplative way, I must have drifted across the borderland and entered into the realm of the spirit. The transliminal self assumed control, and began that series of baffling acts that deceived both of us.

"While in this condition I must have prepared the rag with a bloody imprint of my own finger on it. How I got into the basement of the house is beyond me, but that would not have been so difficult to do. That clew was intended as a challenge to my normal self, and I accepted it. The discovery of the abnormal fingerprint aroused me and started me into my speculation regarding character reading from fingerprints.

"The next step in the process of building up this unknown personality was the placing of the piece of paper in my office with the crude bomb drawing on it and the second fingerprint impression. Nothing was easier than for me to do this while in the hypnotic state. I had apparently visited Miss Seldon's apartment and secured enough of the perfume of the Cassiopeia plant to scent the paper, which, as you remember, gave us the clew to the location of the bomb. Also I must have interviewed Meteso and obtained the fer-de-lance and bomb from him. That, too, would have been a simple undertaking.

"As to the cause of the wild laugh and growl that night you first heard it, I can explain it only on the theory that I had returned from one of my nightly adventures, and while in the hypnotic state gave vent to them as an expression of the triumph of my other self. I awakened from the trance when you appeared, and of course remembered nothing about the evening's work.

"My suspicions were directed toward Parks and Mr. Fraser. The former was eliminated when we tried to get the latter's fingerprints in the cellar. That little episode is easily explained. It was an accident apparently that I left one of my fingerprints in the flour. In my excitement at finding that Fraser wore gloves, I must have touched a hand to the floor, and this came out in the second photograph and deceived both of us. As we believed this evil genius was following us, it never dawned upon us to look for our own prints. It was an inexcusable mistake that we were not familiar with our own fingermarks.

"The mysterious appearance of marks of our enemy in the coal cellar and the presence of the fake Cassiopeia plant can be explained by the secret passage to the house from the river. How I knew of that passage when in the hypnotic state, I cannot explain. But I knew of it, and you had abundant testimony of the truth of this statement when you followed me that night. The tunnel, as I have discovered since, was built in pre-Revolutionary days to enable members of the house to escape to the river when attacked. Several such subterranean passageways have been unearthed at different times.

"After getting the plant from Meteso, I must have entered the cellar through this passage and placed it there to deceive myself. How well it worked you know. The loaded lead pencil was also a part of the scheme my other self con-

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cocted to test my abilities in following clews. The reason why we suspected Meteso, and his appearance at the window one night, are both explained by this theory of hypnotism, as well as by Meteso's confession. I had had intercourse with him, and he knew me, while I was ignorant of his face when in a normal state.

"My absence on the night when you followed me through the subterranean passage, and the appearance of the blood marks on the wall of your room, no longer puzzle me. Having spent a night roaming about, I returned while you were asleep and visited your room. I had cut my finger, and the blood was used to mark the prints on the wall. When I awakened I knew nothing of all this.

"Now, Montague, I have explained to you my theory of this series of events which so baffled us. I have even gone to the trouble of having a private seance with a professional hypnotist. In his presence I succeeded in self-hypnotizing myself. I passed into a new world where I talked of things which verified my suspicions. I was restrained from doing anything to increase our perplexity by my friend, who was forewarned.

"There is one thing that needs explaining. There is no record of a single proved case of veritable crime committed through hypnotic influence. The transliminal self is by nature upright, and cannot be led into crime against its will. Deep in every soul there is a repugnance against crime.

"But we must remember that the other self of me did not commit crime. It merely took my suggestions and planned a series of clews which would tend to mislead me and test my abilities. It was what I had long desired; it was something I had theorized on until the suggestion was taken up by my other self. It is true there was punishment attached to each one if we failed to learn of it in time. That is a part of a detective's business, to be on the lookout for danger, and it was but the carrying out of my own suggestion.

"In making this confession, I am but admitting that there is another self to us, which, if we permit it and suggest to it, can take possession of our bodies and perform feats that sometimes border upon the supernatural. Yet nothing supernatural was performed by me while in the hypnotic state. There is an explanation for every step. We were baffled chiefly because we allowed our minds to create an invisible personality that seemed to have the power to pass through bolted doors and locked windows. It [illegible] upon us that the person was [illegible] than myself.

"Our enemy thus vanishes into thin air—our Meteso, the wonderful Oriental with tricks to deceive the most learned, becomes a plain, somewhat thick-witted, everyday Jap. We conjured into existence a creature not subject to the ordinary laws of nature, and thereby frightened ourselves; but the chimera vanishes under the application of clear reasoning and cool logic. We became obsessed by the idea that the fingerprints of this unknown person had all the earmarks of a wonderful genius, a master rogue, a man who could baffle the best detective in the world; but now we find that he is merely a creature of the imagination. So falls my theory of fingerprints, Montague. I believe—unless I admit that I possess those wonderful qualities I ascribed to Meteso—that character is not indexed by fingerprints. It is a science that falls before the facts. At any rate it is to me too crude and unscientific to warrant further serious thought.

"I am going away to rest; I need it. I shall battle against this other self that I have conjured up. Knowing the facts I can restrain him. It is not well to permit the mind to dwell too much upon the subjective nature. So long as we are bound to this mortal part of us, we must not permit the spirit to get beyond the control of the will. Auto-suggestion may thus, when not properly restrained, prove a danger rather than a help.

"I often muse on the idea of how all this would strike Inspector McGonigle. It would be too deep for him, and I believe he would suspect me and accuse me of crime. Perhaps he would conclude I was insane. So we will not let him into the secret—not yet, at any rate. It is yours and mine, Montague—for the present. Some day we shall give it to the world as an interesting illustration of the powers of auto-suggestion and self-hypnosis."

Maxine's confession, I believe, explains everything, and there is nothing I can add to it to make it more convincing. So I will close this curious narrative and leave the matter as it stands.

The End.

* * *

Telephone Slaves.

Her [illegible] fingers lay lightly on the arm of [illegible]. He covered them with his [illegible], strong hand.

She turned her fair head away to hide the great tears that welled from her brimming eyes.

"Bernice," he said, with an intensity that fairly shouted, though he spoke in a whisper. "Bernice, will you let me hold this tender little hand in mine the rest of the way through life?"

Suddenly she sprang to her feet and shook off his clinging clasp.

"There's the 'phone," she said. "Excuse me a minute."

Lighting the tenth cigar since dinner, Lester Lobbertson opened the door into the hall and listened to the muffled sounds from upstairs.

Then he turned and resumed his nervous march up and down the room.

His hands were clenched, his forehead was damp.

He halted to stare at a photograph in a gold frame, the portrait of a beautiful [illegible] woman. He muttered a sentence that was half prayer, half curse.

The door opened and a white-capped nurse looked in. There was a smile in [illegible] he saw, as he rushed toward [illegible]

"[illegible] Lobbertson," she [illegible]

[illegible] the telephone bell had [illegible] man had hastened [illegible] the call.

"Hello! Why, hello, Jim! What's that, [illegible] say, I'd certainly like to, old man, but I expect to be pretty busy [illegible] tomorrow. Have a good [illegible] me, old sport; I hope you [illegible] on. Good night."

[illegible] up the earpiece.

"Now [illegible] naughtily!"

"It [illegible]," said the nurse.

At the head of the library table sat Mr. Tulkinghorn with a long, white envelope in his hand.

"Are we all here?" he asked, glancing around at the solemn-faced family. They nodded, fixing their eyes on the long, white envelope.

With a grim determined air he broke the seals, as if it took a certain amount of courage to open the will of Simeon Hulkersmelter, which it did, indeed, for if the document in the lawyer's hands had been an infernal machine charged with nitro-glycerin it would have contained no more power over the peace and happiness of those who watched so anxiously.

"'I, Simeon Hulkersmelter,'" the lawyer had begun to read, when a maid tapped at the door.

"'Phone, madam," she said.

"You will have to wait, Mr. Tulkinghorn," spoke the billionaire's widow, rising in haste. "I suppose it's the milliner to ask about Clara's hats."

* * *

Vain Wish.

"I wish something would blow down on me," remarked the goose that had been robbed of its feathers.

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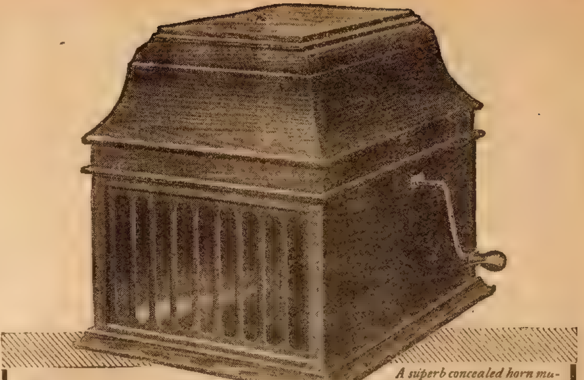

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GENTLE JABS

Few tears are worth their salt

It's easy to fill empty heads with hot air.

Trust a chicken-hearted man to hatch excuses!

And many a man is sold without getting his price.

Even an old soak has been known to generate dry wit.

The fruits of industry do not grow on every family tree.

Many a little man carries around a big opinion of himself.

The best man sometimes wins by losing at a wedding

Many a chap catches on who doesn't know how to let go.

Carpet is purchased by the yard and worn out by the foot.

It's easier to talk than it is to acquire the wood-sawing habit.

He's a stingy man who won't even give you a pleasant look.

Love yourself as you do your neighbor and see how far you'll get.

Second thoughts are best because they are usually less expensive.

The hen that cackles loudest doesn't always lay the biggest egg.

Some gifts were better left ungiven—the gift of gab, for instance.

Sometimes a woman can flatter a man by telling him that she can't.

And the oftener you look back, the quicker you won't get there.

Time may be money, but it's a poor substitute for a bank account.

There are more ways of spending money than there are of making it.

The woman who quarrels with her complexion is always ready to make-up.

A wife governs best who conceals from her husband the fact that she is trying.

People may speak well of the dead—because they had spoken otherwise while they were living.

A lawyer is a man who is willing to bear the burdens of others—if he is allowed to fix his own freight rates.

Give people what they think they want instead of what they really need, and they'll go on their way rejoicing.

After a man finds himself in a hole it's surprising how many people there are who could have told him what path he might have taken to avoid it.

P E P P E R S

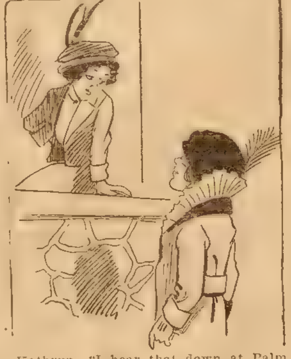
Her Suggestion.

Very newly wed, they were. They were also very happy. Quite inexperienced and somewhat silly. Besides, they had a new home and a "truck patch."

"Susie, honey," he said, "I've been in the garden and I saw some asparagus ready for cooking. You shall have the pleasure of gathering the first fruit of the season."

She would love to, but she wasn't expert in horticulture and didn't want to 'let on.' If she went alone she might commit some egregious blunder

"I tell you what, Edwin," exclaimed the girl-wife, enthusiastically, "we'll go together. You shall pluck it and I will hold the ladder!"



Kathryn—"I hear that down at Palm Beach you were completely surrounded by men."

Kittye—"That isn't true. There was only one man who surrounded me."

Would Not Be Outdone.

The Cramps built a cruiser for the Russian Government some years ago, and there were a number of Russian naval officers at the yard during the course of its construction.

After the boat had been accepted, the Russians gave a dinner in Washington to celebrate the event and invited the builders and the men who had furnished armor plate, and so on

When it came time for toasts the Russians proposed the health of the Czar, drank it, and crashed their glasses on the floor This amazed the Americans, who asked why the Russians were breaking the glassware in that fashion.

"Because," it was explained, "that is the custom in our country. Whenever we drink to the Czar we break the glasses so they may never be profaned by any less worthy toast."

Two days later the steel men gave a return dinner. The time for toasts came and the head steel man gave one to the President of the United States

After the toast had been drunk the head steel man grabbed the tablecloth, yanked it from the table and sent everything on it to the floor. The noise could be heard two blocks away.

"Why do you do that?" asked the astonished Russians.

"Because," said the head steel man, 'when we drink the health of the President of the United States we not only break the glasses but everything else on the table!"

The Effect.

In a discussion of the pauperizing effect of indiscriminate charity, Mrs. Russell Sage, whose charity is always wise once said:

"I used to know a good old clergyman who devoted over half of his income to the poor.

"In this good clergyman's parish there was a man to whom he gave every week coal and flour, sugar and tea, potatoes and meat. Remembering how the clergyman had to deny himself in order to give so generously, a lady said to this pensioner one day:

"'Don't you think it's very good of Dr Fifthly to look after you like this, and give you all these nice things?'

"The pensioner, who was lunching on the good old clergyman's bounty at the time, looked up, with his mouth full of steak.

"'Good of him?' he exclaimed. 'Why, what's he fur?'"

Well Named.

A captain of one of the ocean liners was showing a young lady friend of his over the ship during one of his eastward trips. As they passed through the steerage he called his fair companion's attention to a big, husky Irish emigrant, who was putting away with knife, fork and spoon a bountiful supply of corned beef and cabbage, combined with other articles of diet. The captain eyed him for a moment, then, addressing the young lady, said.

"Just look at the enormous amount of food that fellow is consuming."

'I suppose, Captain," said the fair young girl, with a beaming smile 'he is what you sailors call a stowaway.'

Overlooked It.

Blue sky promoters are men so optimistic where other people's money is concerned that they will promote not merely barren gold and silver mines, but the blue sky itself

Former Postmaster General Hitchcock was talking about a blue sky promoter who had been convicted of fraud

"This man's mine," he said, "reminded me in its scarcity of gold of the railway sandwich

' 'There ain't no ham in this here sandwich,' a man growled, seated on a high stool before the marble bar of an old-fashioned railway restaurant

"'Oh, you ain't come to the ham yet,' the attendant answered easily.

The man ate on a while longer. Then he growled again:

" There ain't no ham yet.'

"'Oh,' said the attendant. 'you've bit over it now' '

There's Many a Slip.

Smithson had been really a power in his day. At any rate, he had held a job bringing him in some thousands a year—that is to say, until the smash came After that he failed to hold any job he got, and became permanently out of luck.

His old friend Jenkins was a bit surprised, therefore, when Smithson stopped him in the street one day and angrily exclaimed:

"D'you know, I just received the prize insult of my life! A chap down in the city offered me a job this morning!"

"Offered you a job!" replied Jenkins "D'you call that an insult? I thought you were looking for a job!"

'Yes, but not at ten dollars a week Hang it all. I can borrow more than that from you!"

The Spider's Quest.

When Mark Twain, in his early days was editor of a Missouri paper, a superstitious subscriber wrote to him saying that he had found a spider in his paper, and asking him whether that was a sign of good luck or bad. The humorist wrote him this answer and printed it:

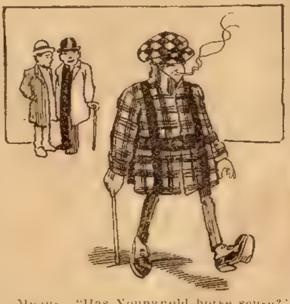
"Old Subscriber: Finding a spider in your paper was neither good nor bad luck for you The spider was merely looking over our paper to see which merchant is not advertising, so that he can go to that store, spin his web across the door and lead a life of undisturbed peace ever afterward."

When Women Voted.

It had been a hard day at the polls. The addition of nearly a thousand women's votes to the poll made the counting a prolonged proposition.

"Well, James," said Mrs. Wallicky, as her husband returned from his arduous labors as a teller, "how did the vote go?'

"Nine hundred and two votes for Bildad, 753 for Slathers, eight recipes for tomato ketchup, four wash lists and a milliner's bill," said Wallicky. "It was a mighty interesting vote."



Moggs "Has Younggold horse sense?'

Spoggs—"No, but he wears a horse-blanket overcoat."

LIGHT.

Willie was with matches playing,
Willie ate them on the quiet;
Willie heard the doctor saying
Willie needed a light diet.

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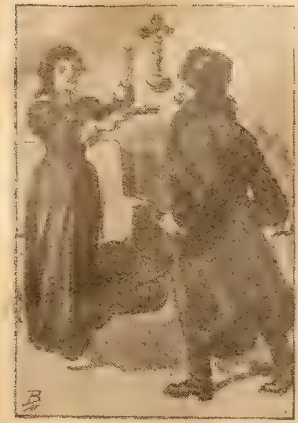
The Palace of Doom

Or, The Passion of an Empress

By Hugh Hamilton



"You shall!"

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Begun in No. 5, January 31. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication

CHAPTER XX.

LOVE WINS AT LAST.

A MORE dejected man than Count Orloff never paced down the steps of a palace He had failed in his base designs against Paul, and what nettled him most was the belief that Xenia knew of his intentions. She, instead of Paul, had entered the oval chamber at the important moment, and had faced him in his baseness. Had Paul come, he would have received the blades of the conspirators before he could have drawn his own, and the pair would have gloated over their act.

The Countess was all smiles to Orloff. She was the merriest one at the grand banquet, which terminated the fete, and standing at the brilliantly lighted front of the palace, had wished her guests good night in her sweetest voice.

Paul lingered. "Will you not tell me, dearest," said he, looking up into her face, "whom you found in the oval room?"

"Let it pass, dear Paul," was the smiling reply.

"The note which I received bidding me to the chamber hinted at a secret which I was to have revealed to me."

"It is well that I took your place," said Xenia. "Let my little adventure abide with me," and taking his hand, she leaned forward for his kiss, and thus they parted.

Count Orloff had lost none of his anger when he reached his princely habitation. His face was flushed over his failure to rid himself of his rival in the Empress's affections. He had seen that his long reign as favorite was waning, and that erelong a new star would rise to blot out his importance. He hated Catherine for her partiality to Paul, who he knew really loved Xenia. Would she finally draw the young Colonel to her side, or would he brave it out, and at last leave him in possession of his honors?

It was not until the following night that Orloff ascended the steps of the Winter Palace and presented himself to Catherine. He had postponed the interview as long as possible. The Empress was writing at her table when he entered the lofty room, and she calmly finished a sentence before she turned to the former favorite.

"You have come to report, Count?" said she, centering upon him a look of curbed impatience. "You attended the Countess Carloff's fete?"

"At the command of your majesty," bowed Orloff.

"Tell me all," and Catherine prepared to listen to the narration.

It was a specious story the Count told. After describing Xenia's dress and manners, along with the costumes of her guests, he leaped suddenly to the subject nearest his heart.

"The most favored of all the guests was Colonel Daroski of the Guards."

A tinge of pallor came to the Empress's countenance.

"She devoted much of her time to him," Orloff continued, "and he reciprocated like a netted schoolboy."

"Made love to her?" flashed Catherine.

"In the presence of all," was the reply. "Two more devoted lovers I am sure I have never seen."

The pen dropped from Catherine's hand, and for a moment she averted her face. Orloff watched her like a hawk. Oh, if he could but read the tablets of her haughty soul at that moment! He knew her moods, her passions and her hatreds. He had fathomed each during the long years of his ascendency. Catherine was no longer young, but she had retained much of her beauty and had lost none of her passions.

She was still the great Empress, the friend of Frederick the Great and of Voltaire, the patron of art and literature, and the warrior queen of the world.

For some minutes after Orloff ceased speaking she remained silent. The muscles of her face twitched, and she passed a hand over her brow as if to still the torrent of her thoughts.

Suddenly she opened a drawer in the table and took out a sheet of paper. Her face was partly averted, but the watchful Count could see that it was as white as snow.

"The bubble has burst," thought the conniving man. "I have pricked it, and it has finally dissolved."

Catherine bent forward and slowly read the writing on the parchment.

"You are always ready to carry out my wishes, Count?" said she in heavy tones.

"I have never failed, your majesty."

"Then witness my signature and carry out this imperial ukase."

Orloff sprang to his feet and went over to the Empress's side

"Read and obey," said Catherine, leaning back in her chair

Almost breathless, the Count ran his eyes down the page. The silence seemed palpable.

"You will carry out this ukase in person," continued the Empress with palpitating bosom. "One to Archangel, the other to Obdurst."

"I understand. It is more than a thousand versts between them."

Catherine nodded.

"The Countess Xenia to Obdurst."

[illegible]

"Paul Daroski to Archangel."

"So reads the ukase."

Orloff's heart beat fast. He saw that vengeance had at last taken the place of love. Catherine, balked in her designs, had torn Paul from her heart, and Orloff could see what the deed had cost her.

The great Empress had exiled the lovers to the land of eternal snow. Not only this, but she had separated them as far as possible, sending Xenia to the farthest northern mine, from which no one had ever returned alive to the empire.

Such was to be the revenge of this woman, and Orloff rejoiced to know that his lie had made all this possible. Had he told the truth about the fete, the ukase which Catherine had written for an emergency would never have seen the light of day.

"When shall they start?" asked Orloff.

"Tomorrow before sunrise."

"It shall be done, your majesty."

"And your reward shall be the Jewel of St. Peter."

Count Orloff left the imperial presence with the step of a boy.

It was all over for Paul and his love. Never would they look into each other's eyes or breathe the delights of love. Catherine could be merciless. This woman could love and hate, and of the two passions hate was now on the throne.

The great Empress after bidding adieu to Orloff remained for some time like one in a stupor. When she emerged from the strange spell, she slowly left her chair and tottered across the room.

"Gone!" she wailed from the depths of her soul. "The last casket of love my hands would open is empty. What is greatness, what is power, what is a royal diadem when one cannot have a return of love? Heaven pity me, Empress, though I am. Royalty, I hate thee! Had I remained in Pomerania I might be happy now. Why did my mother sell me to the Russian Peter. Why not give me to a poor toiler of the fields? He rejects my love, and I have loaded him with honors. He prefers the Carloff to his Empress. And I have sent him into eternal exile amid the unchanging snows. This is the vengeance of Catherine. Did Orloff lie to me? Oh, Heaven! Did that man weave a story of the fete which was a tissue of falsehoods? Farewell, Daroski! Farewell forever my peace of mind. In your hut in Siberia may you think of Catherine."

She clutched at the door and seemed to stagger. Her cry rang through the white palace. In another moment she had sunk to the floor, her hands tearing from her brow the tiara of jewels that mocked her defeat and loneliness.

There were hasty footsteps in the corridor. The white-faced servants could not open the heavy door. They retired to come back again. And as they accomplished their mission the clock of St. Isaac's boomed the darkest hour before dawn.

It was daylight when Orloff rose from his silken couch. It was the day of the double exilement. He was dressing for the occasion when the grand chamberlain bounded up the steps of the palace a gift from Catherine, and burst into his presence.

"What is it, man?" cried the Count.

"The Empress——"

"What of the Empress?" and Orloff clutched the man's arm till he winced with pain.

"The Empress—is—dead!"

"Dead?"

Orloff recoiled with a cry.

"And Paul, her son, is Czar."

The sun rose and dissipated the heavy clouds that hovered over the capital.

"Long live the Emperor Paul I!" came to the ears of the half-stunned Count.

He knew what that meant. He knew that there would be no long journeys to Siberia. His star had set; his lies had killed his Empress; he had woven the net of safety for Paul and Xenia, and as he gazed out of his window upon the crowds in the snowy street, he must have thought how evanescent are fame and fortune.

Long before the great Catherine was carried to the tombs of the Czars, mandates of mercy came from the Winter Palace, and Paul Daroski and Xenia, standing side by side, with love light in their eyes, knew that the Palace of Doom had become the Palace of Love.

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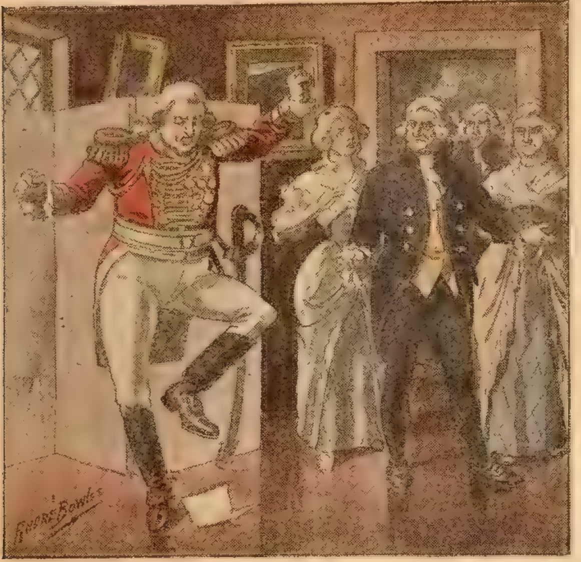
Dick o' the Dark

Or, The Night Hawks of '76

By Captain Jack Judson



"It is simply infamous!"

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Begun in No. 8, February 21. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER VII.

COLONEL TARLETON'S SUPPER.

IF THE Tories who had gathered at Patrick Malloy's house had suspected that their prisoner, Tiny Tom, had overheard the intention of their meeting at Silt's to confer with no less a person than the redoubtable Colonel Tarleton, they would have suspected that the gathering would reach Rebel ears.

Tarleton was very anxious to bring about a battle with General Morgan, who was retreating before his redcoats, and besides he was desirous of receiving aid from the numerous Tories who infested the district. It was with this design that he consented to leave his command for a short time and meet the Loyalists at Silt's.

Reuben Silt was a man of some wealth, and moreover one of the most active Tories. There was nothing too much that he was willing to do for the King, and the patriots hated him with all their souls, for he was as cruel and desperate as he was hateful. He lived in a fine house surrounded by a grove of lordly trees, under which his friends often gathered for conference, and the spot was often called Silt's Fort.

The man had a wife who was as great a Tory as himself, and she had more than vented her spite on her poorer patriot neighbors. Barbara Silt had often urged her husband to deeds of rapine, and on more than one occasion had narrowly escaped the vengeance of the liberty-loving women of the Pacolet.

She fairly worshiped Colonel Tarleton because of his cruelty, and was greatly elated when she learned that he was to become her guest. She set about at once to prepare a sumptuous spread for him, taxing her kitchen to its utmost capacity to furnish the British officer with a bounteous feast.

The shades of night were softly descending when Colonel Tarleton, accompanied by a single aide, reined in his mettled steed before the Silt home. He was arrayed in the handsome uniform which he always wore, and his bosom blazed with the decorations he had won. Mrs. Silt welcomed him on the porch, and the doughty, Colonel kissed her hand.

"A fine evening, dear madam," observed Tarleton, in his most courteous manner.

"Made for the occasion," returned the Tory's wife. "I trust your campaign is progressing favorably?"

"As well as could be expected. That old fox Morgan is still trying to elude me, but I shall bring him to bay erelong, and then the last Rebel rabble will vanish from the Carolinas."

"Good!" cried Barbara Silt, clapping her fat hands. "And then I will show these Rebel women hereabouts that we have the whip hand."

"I admire your loyalty. But where are the friends whom I was to meet here?"

"They will appear presently, Colonel Tarleton. My husband has gone down the river road on an errand, and will bring some of them in."

Her words proved prophetic, for her lord and master soon made his appearance accompanied by half a dozen well-dressed Tories, who were warmly welcomed by the officer.

Patrick Malloy soon came in.

"What do you think?" cried he, at sight of his friends. "That young shrimp whom I imprisoned in my cellar has made his escape. Got out through the old drain. It must have been a tight squeeze."

"We should have completed the job by hanging him," spoke up one of the Tories.

"That we should. I see our blunder now. But we'll catch him again, and then for a little neck stretching."

He's a sleek one, Patrick."

"As sleek as you get them," was the reply. "Why I wouldn't have thought a lizard could get through the drain. But he won't have a long breathing spell, I assure you. Gentlemen, this is Colonel Tarleton."

The Colonel was introduced to the assemblage and shook hands with each individual. It was not long before the secret conference was on, while Barbara withdrew to superintend the supper.

"I understand," said the officer, "that this neighborhood is troubled by a boy who is called Dick o' the Dark."

"A contumacious little imp," flashed Master Gaffney.

"A veritable fly-by-night," hissed another Tory.

"He needs a halter."

"So do all his followers."

"Why can't you entrap him?" asked Tarleton.

"He is a will-o'-the-wisp," explained Malloy. "He is here one minute and gone the next. But we hope to put an end to his depredations before long."

"I wish I could run across him," returned the Briton. "I just like to get such young rascals into my clutches. He's liable to convey reports of my movements to the enemy."

"He will if he can, your excellency."

"How many boys does he command?"

"A full dozen at least. They are called the Night Hawks, and real hawks they are, too."

"We must catch them," said Tarleton. "I am here to rid the colony of just such pests. I assure you that when I have them in my power they will get justice."

"We pray you may run across the young imps."

"Aha! what vision of beauty is this?" exclaimed Tarleton, at this juncture, rising from his chair, for a young girl had entered the room and stood blushing in the middle of the floor.

"That is my only daughter, Imogene," answered Silt, with a glow of fatherly pride. "She is the angel of the district."

"I can well believe you, Friend Silt," replied Tarleton, admiring the girl. "Does she sing?"

"Admirably."

There was a piano in one corner of the room, and Master Silt escorted his daughter to it.

Imogene was a fine musician, and very soon her voice was ringing throughout the house. Under the spell of her music Tarleton seemed to forget his errand, for he lay back in his chair and half-dreamily closed his eyes. Song after song issued from the girl's throat, and when the last one had ceased to echo the doughty Colonel clapped his hands.

"Wonderful!" cried he. "I haven't heard such music since I left England."

"There is nothing like it in North America. By the way, Imogene has captured a Rebel song, one which was composed by Tiny Tom, the pestiferous scamp who eluded Friend Malloy last night."

"Let us have it, by all means. I have heard of this backwoods minstrel since I entered the Carolinas."

"I don't like to sing Rebel songs," whispered Imogene.

"I'll forgive you, young lady," said Tarleton. "I am anxious to know what sort of composer this boy Rebel is."

The girl seated herself at the piano and began to sing one of Tiny Tom's compositions.

It was Rebel to the core, full of praise for Washington and terribly denunciatory of King George.

"And you let such a songster go unpunished?" cried Tarleton, with flushed face, when the song was concluded.

"We don't intend to, your excellency," said Silt. "But for his shrewdness last night he would be here now your prisoner."

"Now, more than ever, I want to make his acquaintance," the officer exclaimed.

"We pledge you, sir, that the introduction shall soon take place," Master Gaffney assured.

"See that it does."

At this juncture the door opened, and the face of Mrs. Silt appeared. She beckoned to her daughter, who rose and left the room.

"Everything is ready now but the victuals in the spring-house," the mother said. "The big cakes and the luscious pies are there. You will take Susan and Dolly thither and bring them up."

"Yes, mother," and Miss Imogene sum-

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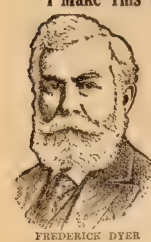
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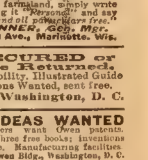
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moned the servants and tripped out of the house.

The spring-house was situated at the foot of a hill a few yards from the house. It was a commodious affair, and the victuals were often placed on its shelves for safe-keeping.

Barbara Silt had done herself proud in her preparations for her distinguished guest. The very best things in her capacious larder had been prepared for him, and she had worked with a will to make them excellent.

All at once a series of cries came from direction of the spring-house. They had not ceased when the door was thrown open, and Miss Imogene rushed in, followed by two white-faced servants, one of whom fell in a faint on the floor.

"We've been robbed!" shrieked Imogene. "Everything in the spring-house is gone!"

Mrs. Silt fell against the table for support.

"Merciful heavens!" rang from her ashen lips.

"There was nothing there but empty dishes and—this," and Imogene held up a folded paper

By this time the room swarmed with the guests, including Colonel Tarleton, who was striving to maintain his dignity

"Let Colonel Tarleton read the message," said Silt

It was placed in his hands, and his face went white as his eye sought the page.

"It is simply infamous!" he hissed, and then he read aloud:

"To Master Silt and his Friends: Not having had a royal feast for some time, I have taken the liberty of eating Colonel Tarleton's supper, and if I find Mistress Barbara's cooking all right, I will be glad to furnish a suitable testimonial. Long live liberty in North America! DICK O' THE DARK."

Tarleton flung the letter to the floor and crushed it with his heel

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MOONLIGHT FIGHT.

NOT far from the scene of consternation at Reuben Silt's house a little party of boys were enjoying a feast. The contents of the spring-house were being devoured with great gusto, and now and then Tiny Tom enlivened the occasion with snatches of song.

"It's a supper fit for a king!" exclaimed Dick o' the Dark, as he cut into a luscious pudding. "I must say that Mistress Barbara's baking is splendid."

"And the pies are fine," iterated Tom, taking a new mouthful. "I would like to sing praises of Tory cooking, and I will the first chance I get."

The stolen supper was not concluded for some time. The young partisans had chosen a secluded spot for the feast, and almost forgot the vengeful ones in the house not far away.

"Ho! what is that?" exclaimed Dick, springing suddenly to his feet. "I hear the sound of horses," and every boy stood alert with his ears on the qui vive.

"They're on the trail," cried one of the other boys. "Thank goodness they let us finish the good things!"

There was no mistaking the noises that had assailed their ears. The Tories had sprung to saddle, and were on the trail of the purloiners.

"Mount!" cried Dick o' the Dark. "We'll lead them a merry chase."

In another moment the Night Hawks were scurrying away, still laughing at the trick they had served their enemies.

On came the Tories, riding like the wind, and all the time filling the air with threats of the direst vengeance. The moon had risen and was sailing proudly through the unclouded heavens, and objects were visible at considerable distance. The horses of the Loyalists were fresh, and each one bore his rider swiftly.

"There they go!" shouted Silas Gaffney, as he broke out into the open and discerned the Night Hawks in the near distance. "Don't let the young imps escape us. I'll find the ropes, and when we've finished our work the trees will bear new fruit."

The boys could look back and see their enemies. Across the country went pursuers and pursued. Neither spared horse flesh as over hill and dale they went in hot haste.

"Halt!" suddenly commanded Dick, and every rein was drawn.

They had reached a little valley where the foliage was quite dense, and Dick drew his pistol and deliberately cocked it. His companions did the same.

On came the Tories, spurring their steeds to new endeavors, and eager to come up with the young partisans.

"Ready!" said Dick, in low but thrilling tones

Every weapon was leveled at the advancing men.

"Fire!"

Seven pistols spoke at once, and two men reeled in their saddles.

"Long live Washington!" shouted the boys.

The rest of the Tories drew back.

"Down with the invaders!" cried Dick o' the Dark.

Already the King's men had had enough. They did not care to face the aim of their antagonists, and the few balls that were sent into their midst did no particular harm.

"They don't want any more," Dick remarked, as he saw the Tories turn their horses' heads. "We've had the feast, and can lick the platters."

The enemy rode back. In a short time they disappeared, and the boys had possession of the field. The two Tories who had dropped from the saddles were only wounded, and were carried back to Silt's.

Colonel Tarleton was still in a rage. He swore by all the saints that he would have no rest till Dick and his comrades were exterminated. He would show no mercy, he declared, for had they not deprived him of a most excellent supper? He walked the floor in his anger, clinching his fists and pouring out threat after threat in rapid volume. His camp was not far off, and at last taking leave of his Tory friends, he remounted, and accompanied by his aide, rode quickly away.

Meantime Dick and his friends had reached a place of safety. They had had adventure enough for one night, and could afford a brief rest. But rest was not for them.

A young girl mounted on a chestnut sorrel suddenly appeared among them. Her face was aglow with excitement, and her eyes fairly flashed.

"The redcoats are burning Enos Tolliver's house!" cried she. "They've driven the family away, and are carrying off the stock."

"The miscreants!" exclaimed Dick, running to his horse. "We may overtake them," and in less than a minute the whole band was on the wing

When a certain hillock was reached, the light of a burning barn could be seen, and putting spurs to their horses, the boys dashed down into the moonlit valley. The dozen dragoons were not aware of the presence of the Night Hawks until they were fairly upon them.

"Charge!" shouted Dick, his voice ringing out in full volume on the night air. "Down with the red vultures of King George!"

The dragoons turned at once to their weapons. The fire spat into the faces of the gallant little band, and it was returned with a vengeance. It was a pretty fight. Several redcoats toppled to the ground, but the others stood firm, and presently the boys were right in their midst.

It was a daring thing to do, seeing that Tarleton's men were armed with fierce-looking sabers, which they were not slow to use. Right and left they struck, while the young rangers returned each stroke with interest, and made use of their pistols.

It was the first time Dick and his band had been hurled back in an encounter. They were forced to retreat, and not far from the battle ground they halted to inquire into their losses. All were there but Tiny Tom, and he was missing.

"I didn't see him fall," remarked Dick.

"No, but I saw a dragoon pull him from his horse," replied one of the others

"It's too bad!" Dick went on, with drooping head. "They'll make short work of poor Tom, and we can't afford to spare him."

Let's go back."

"Not just now. They'll take Tom to Tarleton and let that monster pronounce his fate."

"But we must rescue him."

"Certainly, my lads."

It was true that the boy guard had fallen into the hands of the enemy. He had been jerked from his saddle by a stalwart trooper and was securely a captive

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Well, I didn't like that. I was afraid the horse wasn't "all right" and that I might have to whistle for my money if I once parted with it. So I didn't buy the horse although I wanted it badly. Now this set me thinking.

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Two of the dragoons had been killed and several more wounded, and it was a mad lot that rode back to Tarleton's camp. Not long thereafter the doughty Colonel himself made his appearance and was told about the encounter. He turned to Tiny Tom with a roar of rage.

"And is this little shrimp all you can show for your bravery?" he cried, addressing his men.

"It is all, your excellency," confessed the sergeant of the dragoons.

"Well, I'll take care of him later on. Take him to a secure place and guard him well. Wait! Maybe he's one of the rascals who ate my supper."

Tarleton turned again to the little prisoner and demanded to know if he had feasted on the viands found in Mrs. Silt's spring-house.

"I had my share of the spoils," admitted Tom.

"I thought so. Well, it's the last stolen meal you will ever enjoy!" flashed Tarleton.

"It was a good one, though," returned Tom, with a grimace.

"And I was as hungry as a bear," gruffly retorted Tarleton. "I wish you were Dick o' the Dark," and he turned on his heel and walked away.

The young prisoner was placed in the center of the British camp and guarded by a giant trooper. This fellow was not so gruff as his companions, and looked now and then at Tom with eyes that seemed to emit sympathy.

"I say, boy," he said, coming close to the little singer, "I've got a lad in old England just about your size."

"And you think a good deal of him, don't you?" innocently asked Tom.

"All the world of my little Arthur."

"And I'll bet he loves his father."

"That he does. I wish I hadn't come over here to fight people. I don't like my job."

"I shouldn't think you would," Tiny Tom replied. "You look too good a man to follow such a person as Colonel Tarleton."

"I was a fool for volunteering. I say, boy, I rather like you, for you're in a bad predicament."

"I know I am."

"They tell me you can sing."

"Yes, I can sing, but the songs I sing might not suit you. They are Rebel songs."

The big trooper came close to the boy and presently sat down at his side.

"Sing me a song," said he. "Sing it low so the rest can't hear you."

Tiny Tom complied, and the man listened to one of the most beautiful songs he had ever heard.

"I'm not as bad as I look, Tom," said the man at the end of the song. "Colonel Tarleton shan't hang you if Percy Nottoway can help it."

CHAPTER IX.

INTO A TRAP.

"IT WAS a clever trick, but I fear you'll pay for it in the end," said Master Scruggs, the night after the encounter with the dragoons, to Dick o' the Dark who had related his last adventures.

"Yes," added Emily, with her fac

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aglow. "It was really too bad to deprive Colonel Tarleton of his supper. Just think of the pains Barbara Silt had gone to to give him a real Carolina feast!"

Dick laughed. "We were hungry, Miss Emily," said he. "And those puddings and pies tasted so good. There were real plums in the puddings and Malaga raisins in the big pies."

"And it was a sorry outcome for poor Tom," and the young girl sighed.

"He will fare badly if we don't help him. I don't intend to abandon him, for who will sing for us if Bannister Tarleton wreaks his vengeance on the boy?"

In a few moments Dick was once more in the saddle. As Lightning cantered down the road, the boy thought out more than one plan to get Tom out of the redcoat trap, and his brain was ever busy. Well did he know that the boy bard would receive no mercy from Tarleton and his troopers, for mercy was not one of their attributes. The famous trooper was always cruel, and more than once he had surprised little companies of patriots and massacred them to a man.

Suddenly the roan pricked up his fox-like ears and sniffed the air. Dick was instantly on the alert. He knew that so long as Tarleton was in the neighborhood he was none too safe. More than this, he had not forgotten that he had been posted from one end of the district to the other, and that every Tory was on the lookout for him.

Lightning continued to be uneasy. At length Dick drew rein and listened. The horse had not deceived him. Some one was behind him, and the air was so clear that his practiced ears caught the sound of jingling sabers. There could be but one solution to this sound. The enemy was just ahead.

"We must go back, Lightning," he said to his mount. "I don't want to run into danger just now," and he turned about and cantered back.

Presently the sound of hoofs plainly saluted his senses.

"Now for the race!" he cried, and away he went, taking in a short time a byroad which he well knew.

He must have been heard, for a loud shout soon rose behind him, and clatter, clatter came the troop on his track. A run was just to Dick's liking, for he knew the mettle of his steed, and Lightning always enjoyed a race.

A copse of young trees lay in front, and beyond that was a bit of open which would give him a clean run for several miles. Into the copse he dashed, knowing that the enemy was not far behind him. What was his surprise when in the heart of the young timber he heard a stern command to halt?

Shadowy figures lined each side of the road. He had ridden into the midst of some dragoons. His heart rose into his throat at this unexpected accident. He saw a hand dart out to clutch his rein, and Lightning at that moment swerved to one side.

Instantly he drew his pistol, but it was knocked from his grasp by a saber stroke, and he felt the sting all along his arm. Further resistance was impossible. The redcoats closed in with shouts of victory, and Dick was unceremoniously jerked from his saddle and held firmly by half a dozen hands. By this time his pursuers had come up, and he was a prisoner.

"Looks like the little fly-by-night," ejaculated the leader of his captors. "What if it should prove to be he?"

Dick maintained silence. They escorted him into the moonlight and peered into his face.

"Aren't you Dick o' the Dark?" was the demand.

"What if I am?"

"That is proof enough," was the retort. "I guess we've caught the Rebel fox."

"Well," said Dick, confirming his identity, "if you have the fox, see that he doesn't slip through your meshes."

"Never fear for that, my boy," and Dick was placed in the midst of the dragoons, who now galloped up the road.

For the first time he was a prisoner in the hands of the King's men. The future looked dark, for he knew that but little mercy would be shown, and for some time he made no reply to the gibes of his captors.

'Won't Tarleton be glad to see you?" cried one of the fellows.

"I don't see why he shouldn't."

"You ate his supper."

"And it was a royal feast."

"When he gets through with you, you'll have no appetite for pies and puddings."

"But I'll never forget them," laughed Dick.

"Where's old Morgan?" put in another trooper.

"You'll find him, never fear," was the retort.

Some miles farther on the band came in sight of the British campfires, and a few minutes later Dick o' the Dark was in Tarleton's stronghold. The celebrated officer was asleep, but a trooper aroused him with the news and he hurried half-dressed to greet the captive.

"Out night hawking, eh?" were Tarleton's first words as he came up.

"Just riding across the country," answered Dick.

"And into a trap," and Tarleton gazed at the youth who had troubled British and Tory so long.

"I'll see you tomorrow," the officer continued. "Take him away for safekeeping, and the guards shall answer with their heads if the young imp gets away."

Dick o' the Dark was thrown into a strong log hut that stood in the center of the British camp, and left to his reflections. It was not a pleasant situation. There seemed no ray of hope for the young partisan, and he leaned against the wall in silence.

All at once he heard a slight noise not far away.

"I am not alone in this dungeon," thought the boy. "Some one is as unlucky as myself."

"Who is here with me?" said a voice, at sound of which Dick sprang forward and held his breath. "As I live 'tis Master Dick!"

"Tom!"

In the darkness Dick found a pair of hands which he pressed fervently, and the boys were together.

"They haven't hanged you yet," Tom?" the young partisan continued.

"Not yet, Dick, but I guess the rope's ready."

"Well, we won't despair till they spring the drop."

Then Dick told the story of his entrapment, and Tom listened in dead silence.

"If the boys only knew!" sighed the little bard. "They would find some way to help us."

"To be sure they would, but Bannister Tarleton will see that they don't find a way."

It was a long night. Outside could be heard the ceaseless tread of the guard. The soughing of the pines made doleful music on the night air, and from the nearest swamp came the dismal croaking of a thousand frogs.

At last the first glints of daylight relieved the gloom of the hut. The British camp was astir.

"What do they have to eat here?" asked Dick.

"Not Barbara's puddings, you may be sure," answered Tom, with a smile.

A little supply of camp fare was brought to the captives, and they fell to in silence. Presently the door was thrown open, and a stalwart trooper presented himself.

"You are to be taken to Colonel Tarleton," said the fellow, gruffly.

The prisoners were led forth, and found themselves in the midst of half a dozen guards with drawn sabers, and in a few moments they stood in the presence of the dreaded commander.

"I don't think there need be much ceremony," said Tarleton, in his harsh tones. "You have been found in arms against the King, not as regular soldiers but as guerrillas."

"We are not guerrillas," answered Dick, drawing himself to his true height. "We are fighting for liberty and——"

"Silence!" thundered Tarleton, stamping his foot. "You stop our friends by night, you rob people of their suppers, you convey information to the Rebel army, and that is all I care to know."

"Is it more than your command does?" asked Dick. "What is more despicable than the Tories who are too cowardly to wear the King's uniform?"

"I am the court," was the stern reply. "But if you will tell me where General Morgan is at this moment——"

"Stay!" interrupted Dick o' the Dark, throwing up his hand. "I will not betray General Morgan."

"You will not, eh? That is enough. Your answer has condemned you both. I treat you as spies. Take them back, guards. At ten of the clock you shall pay the penalty of rebellion!" and Tarleton strode haughtily away.

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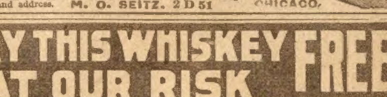

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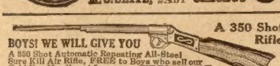

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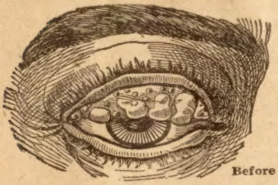

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Donations to the Heathen

(Continued from page two.)

effect of the description, and so clear was the way to the work shown, that five young men went up that night and volunteered as missionaries. Before the covention adjourned there was a motion made and unanimously carried "that this convention hereby tenders its grateful thanks to Mr. B. Linkey Smythe of Tidewell County for bringing it this important information from the foreign land!"

On the morrow's mail there came to Den Halvin, the short and fat chief of police of Marble City, a postal card issued by the sheriff of the county which embraced Drowsyville. In black letters on top was the attractive announcement: "$50 Reward." Following in regular sequence was the description of some clothes and things that had been taken from Caleb Hughes' store at Drowsyville. As an aid to identification the card stated that two suspicious characters had been seen loitering about the depot during the afternoon, one a tall man, very swarthy, with blinking eyes and a "rather desperate expression;" the other was two or three inches shorter, somewhat thin and red-headed.

By an unhappy circumstance, the landlady's little son had begged from Blinkey and Reddy that very morning the blue badges that were their credentials as members of the convention. They had given them to the boy because they knew when they got around to the church they could get some more badges if they wanted them.

It had been the early morning habit of Tidewell County's representatives to stroll out to a wooded pasture south of town and there enjoy a little smoke before the convention met. But for this indulgence Reddy would have surely revolted. This morning the two men were there as usual, stretched out on the greensward enjoying their pipes, when Chief Halvin came along looking for a strayed cow. The moment he observed that flaring red hair on the smaller man's headpiece he thought of the reward card, which he pulled out of his pocket and studied a moment, decided to chance it, and pulled out his revolver.

"You two fellows can consider yourselves under arrest!" cried the officer excitedly.

"What for?" demanded Blinkey, puffing calmly at his pipe.

"Don't make any difference what for! You come along with me, or I'll——"

For an instant Blinkey's eyes lighted dangerously, and then, like the old campaigner he was, he spoke thus to the agitated officer:

"Very well, we will go with you; but you are mistaken in your men.

"We'll see about that," retorted the chief, arrogantly. "March! If you move a step out of the way, I'll shoot!"

With the two men walking side by side in front, the puffing chief, revolver in hand marched them into the city. Nellie, the landlady's daughter, making an early trip to the grocer's saw the startling procession. There were but few people on the streets, and the arrest at that hour caused no excitement except that exhibited by the chief himself. The officer thrust them into the cell, and clanged the iron door harshly.

Reddy turned on his companion.

"I told you we'd better shake this lay, Blink," he snarled. "There's nothin' in it, and we could have made a safe getaway. When your good friends that give you the glad hand last night, and whooped you up—when they hear what's what they'll all be 'round here in a bunch, waitin' to mob us. They'll camp on our trail till we get sent up for life. Them sort of geezers never forgets."

"Shut up, Red!" suggested Blinkey, not unkindly.

"Well, I'm givin' it to you straight," muttered the understudy, to which the senior delegate had no reply.

It was close to nine when the two prisoners were aware of some sort of a disturbance in the front part of the building. Several men were there expostulating with the chief of police, who was trying to defend himself. With the delegation was Nellie, of the house where the Tidewell delegates stopped. The chairman of the missionary convention had been acting as spokesman for the visitors.

"How could I tell they belonged to your crowd?" protested Chief Halvin. "They had no badges or nothing to show."

"They gave their badges to my little brother this morning," was the timely explanation of Miss Nellie. "I saw them do it."

"Badges, or no, Mr. Halvin," sternly declared the chairman, "these men are not rogues, but are duly accredited delegates to our convention, and one of them has been taking a very prominent part in it. A whole room full of people were entertained by Mr. Smythe last night, and I could bring every one of them here to identify him. You've simply made a blunder, and will have to get out of it the best way you can. We are here to demand the immediate release of these gentlemen, with proper apologies."

The chief thought of his bond and of the little farm he had near the city. He also thought of the many lawyers in Marble City who were anxious for a job. He went back to the cell and threw the door open. Reddy eyed him sullenly, Blinkey with judicial gravity.

"Men," spoke the chief, sitting down on the cot, "it seems I made a mistake. A fellow on this kind of a job is always likely to be fooled, with so many reward cards and things to look after. I hope you won't be hard on me. I'm a poor man. Say we call it fifty dollars and forget the whole thing?" and he looked eagerly at the men he had come to liberate.

Inwardly Reddy was jumping over rail fences to get the money, but Mr. B. Linkey Smythe thoughtfully stroked his chin.

"The man seems honest about it, Brother Jones," he remarked, turning to his pal. "It was a bad break, but everybody's liable to make mistakes. I've made 'em myself. Shall we drop the matter?"

"He said something about fifty plunks—I mean dollars," reminded Reddy.

"To be sure," admitted "Brother" Smythe, "but we could only accept that as a donation to the heathen, you know."

Once clear of the dreaded bastile, Reddy anxiously inquired of his pal, whose recent activities had somewhat puzzled him:

"Say, Blink, you was only funnin' when you told that fly cop you was goin' to give that fifty to the heathen, wasn't you?"

"Sure not!" emphatically replied the running mate; "but it's for a pair of 'em that lives in America, Red."

* * *

A Safe Bet.

A group of negroes were standing in front of a little grocery store in a country town, admiring the display of "watermilyuns" lying out on the platform. For a while they discussed the fine points of the different "milyuns," and finally the argument settled into whether or not one man could eat the biggest melon in the pile, which weighed about twenty-five pounds. While this discussion was going on, a long, lank darky joined them.

"What yo' all disputin' about?" he inquired.

"We's jest argifyin'," replied one, "whether or not one man could eat that there milyun all by hisself."

"Shucks!" boasted the newcomer. "I could eat that milyun; and it wouldn't be a smack!"

A white man, who had overheard the remarks, turned to the long, lank darky.

"Why, you fool nigger," he said, "you know you couldn't eat all that melon at one time! I'll bet you you can't."

"What yo' bet?" asked the darky.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," proposed the white man. "If you'll eat it all, I'll pay for it; but if you don't you pay for it."

The negro was a little cautious. "What does that milyun cost?" he asked the storekeeper, who had sauntered out on the platform. It was priced at twenty-five cents. The darky scratched his head in doubt for a minute.

"I tell you what I'll do, boss," he said to the white man. "If yo' all lemme go down to my house a little bit, I'll tell yo' whether I kin eat that milyun. I won't be gone more'n five or ten minutes."

The white man consented, and in about ten minutes the negro returned and announced his readiness to take the wager.

He ate the melon, scraped the rind, and drank the juice.

"Well, you sure win," said the white man, in admiration for his capacity. "But now I would like to know why you went down to your house."

"I done it all right, ain't I?" said the negro a little uneasily.

"You certainly have," assured the white man. "You have won. But I just wanted to know from curiosity why you went to the house."

"Well, I'll tell yo', boss. Us niggers ain't got no money to lose, and I wanted to be sure. I had a milyun about this size down to my house, and I knowed if I could eat it, I could eat this one. So I went home and tried it."—Judge.

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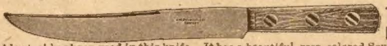

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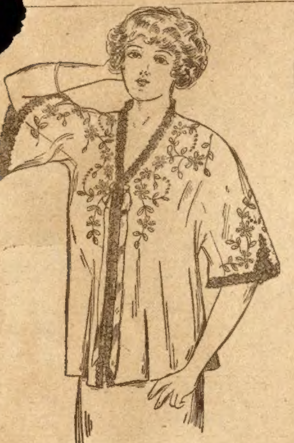

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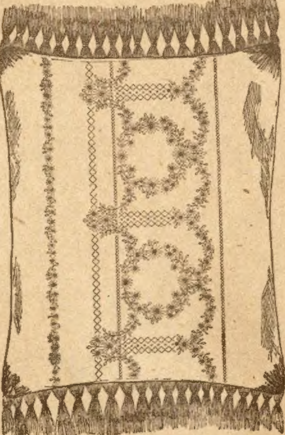

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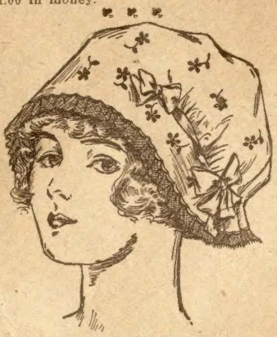

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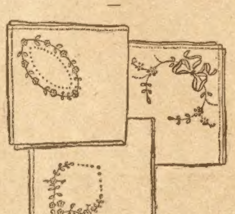

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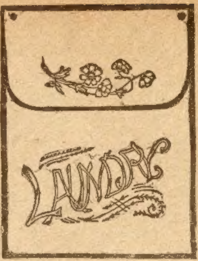

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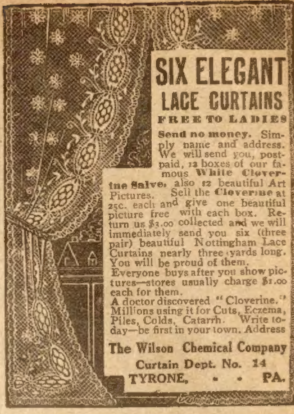

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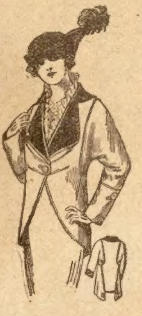
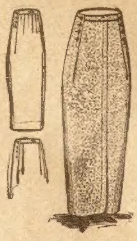


8190 Fancy Cutaway Coat, 34 to 42 bus



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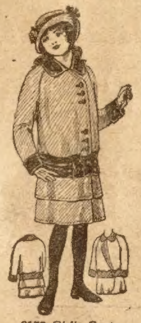
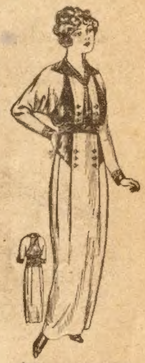
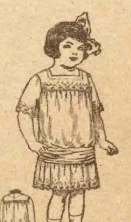


8179 Girl's Coat, 8 to 12 years.



8176 Semi-Princesse Gown, 34 to 40 bust.



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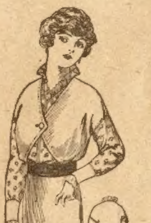
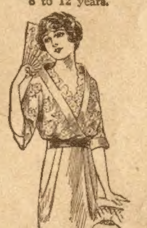
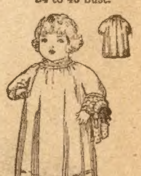


8184 Fancy Blouse, 34 to 42 bust.



8178 Fancy Blouse, 34 to 40 bust.



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If you wish any pattern from those advertised in this issue, mark the number and size on the margin and we will retain a coupon for each pattern we send you when we send you the Coupon Book. (Order by size and number.) **Coupons good for six months.**

No Other Way Can You Earn So Much–Dress So Grand–Build a Big Future!

$60 a Week Easy

How would you like to get such big money and more every week? Wouldn't great? Wouldn't you live swell—couldn't you have everything you ever wa Just think of it! $60 a week as easy as rolling off a log! You absolutely find a position like this anywhere else if you hunt forever. No, not even if you had a pull with everybody. It's a bigger cinch than any politicia It's the biggest, grandest, most stupendous and absolutely sure money-making position ever offered. We say $60 a week because $60 is positively the least you should make in this position. But if you're as much of a live wire as most of our agents, you ought to double that amount easy. We don't care who you are—we don't care where you live or what you work at now, we prove with the most astounding and convincing evidence that we offer you the biggest-paying position open today.

No Money or Experience

You don't need a single dollar of capital—you don't need anything that we don't supply **free.** This is the house that treats its agents right—the house that supplies you with outfits that do the talking and selling for you—the house that gives you the most novel and remarkable lightning-selling helps ever gotten out. This is the house that supplies you with elegant sales-making presents to give your customers. We do all that and more—we do everything. There isn't a thing known within reason we won't do to make it easy for our agents to make big money. We show you how to sell nine out of every ten you call on. All you have to do is wear the nifty suit we give you free and show our magnificent samples and smashed prices and the sale is closed—your big profit is made. You don't have to be "smooth-tongued." You don't have to be educated. You don't need a big bunch of friends to sell Great Central made-to-measure garments. They sell themselves! You can do it—you can make $60 a week—as easy as our thousands of other agents. We don't care what you are doing now, you needn't give up your job right away. You can make big money on the side, in your spare time. Then when you see how easy it is to make big money, you can devote **all** your time to taking orders for Great Central Clothes and make more money than you ever thought possible.

We Beat Them All

Our agents are the livest lot, the most enthusiastic lot, the most prosperous lot, you ever saw. Talk about orders! They simply pour them in. Why? Because we make it dead easy for them! We wiped competition off the map. When any other agent tries to butt in, our agent simply shows our swell samples, nifty styles, low prices, to get the order quick. The live wire agents are rapidly realizing the advantage of tying up with us—they're throwing away their cheap outfits and coming over with us day by day—over where the big money is easy and the sailing smooth—over with the house that's **"First in Everything."** We want you no matter what **you do now.** We'll give you exclusive territory—show you how to be prosperous, independent and the swellest dressed fellow in your town. We will send you our wholesale tailoring outfit, which cost us $76,000.

$76,000 Outfit FREE!

In all your life, wherever you've been, whatever you've seen, whatever you've thought of, you've never beheld such a dazzling, stupendous, magnificent sample display as our famous **"Book of Gold"**—the Masterpiece de Luxe Edition, which we give you free. Think of it! 96 of the niftiest, up-to-the-second styles—the latest things out—the styles every man wants but can't get outside of Chicago and New York except from our agents—styles that are the rage in the metropolis—styles no local tailor can for the life of him duplicate—and 225 of the most gorgeous, elegant, richest patterns you ever laid eyes on—every single one absolutely different and distinctive. We give you this glittering, mammoth **"Book of Gold"** absolutely **free.** We don't charge a cent—you don't make a deposit. It's the grandest and mightiest salesman ever gotten out! It gets the orders where "conversation" would fall down. Our agents are wild about it—amazed, astonished, delighted. **Fink of Arkansas** wrote: "I was absolutely dumfounded." **Martin of South Dakota** wrote: "There isn't any trouble selling for the Great Central." **Lawton of Mississippi** wrote: "It certainly is a corker." No other agent or dealer can get a look-in when you show our sample book of made-to-order suits or overcoats. **When you show up, other agents shut up!** You get the orders—you get the big profits—$60 a week and more.

Grand Suit FREE!

Made to your own measure from any style and fabric you select, without a cent cost to you. We even pay the express charges. That means just what it says—there's no bluff about it. We simply don't stop at any expense to make our agents successful. Every time we turn around we think of something new to help make big money for them. That's our method—that's why our agents are prosperous—that's why they stick with us—that's why we are positively the largest, strongest and best wholesale tailoring concern of our kind in America. We give you this swell suit or overcoat free because we want you to be the real thing—the fashion model—the style setter in your town and wherever you go. The minute you put it on everybody will notice your classy appearance—your friends and even strangers will ask you where you got it. They will want one like it and you take their order. It's the easiest thing you ever saw. This is no bunk—we're telling you the absolute truth—the experience of all our agents. They tell us how easy they find it and we tell you.

Surest Guarantee Known!

You ought to see our Customer's Assurance Certificate of Guarantee. You ve heard about and read about other guarantees, but what do they really guarantee? What good are they? You don't want "conversational" guarantees—your customers don't want common "talk." Not on your life! You want something **legal,** binding, iron-clad, and here's where you get it. Just remember our Customer's Assurance Certificate of Guarantee stands back of every Great Central garment to guarantee we positively refund purchase price if after examination any garment fails to give absolute satisfaction. It guarantees every single garment shipped by us is **tailor-made** especially to order from measurements sent us in each individual case. Remember that we absolutely do not make ready-made garments. We make Great Central garments so far superior to all that every customer is delighted and orders again—nobody ever has a single kick coming. Great Central styles are the work of versatile minds of the cleverest designers high salaries can employ. Our original, classy ideas cost us fortunes every season. The quality of every garment—the unexcelled workmanship and the remarkably perfect fit is the result of brains, ability and care. Any man who wants real swell clothes—wants perfect fit—wants every feature the best—must wear Great Central Clothes. Even competitors will own up to this if you can corner them.

You Can!

Makes no difference what you work at—salesman, clerk, book-keeper, office man, teamster, brick-layer, hod-carrier, driver, tradesman, waiter, farmer, sailor, motorman, or anything else—you can earn big money taking orders for Great Central made-to-measure clothes and we will prove it to you mighty quick if you send the coupon now. **Gannon of Ohio** wrote: "I am pleased to be working for a company so straight in their dealings and do as they advertise they will do." We have hundreds of letters just like this. Don't work any more for a one-horse concern—come with us—connect with

The Big Wholesale Tailors

SMASH Go Prices!

The tariff on woolens has been reduced—and, as always, we are "First in Everything." We pulled off a big trick this season that bewildered, dumbfounded and shamed other manufacturers. We got in ahead of them all with our stupendous orders for the classiest, most exclusive fabrics manufactured by foreign and domestic mills. Again we can undersell everybody $3 to $5 on Suits, Pants or Overcoats. Again we enable our agents to give competitors the laugh and walk away with the orders and profits. Talk about smashing prices! Everybody wonders how we do it!

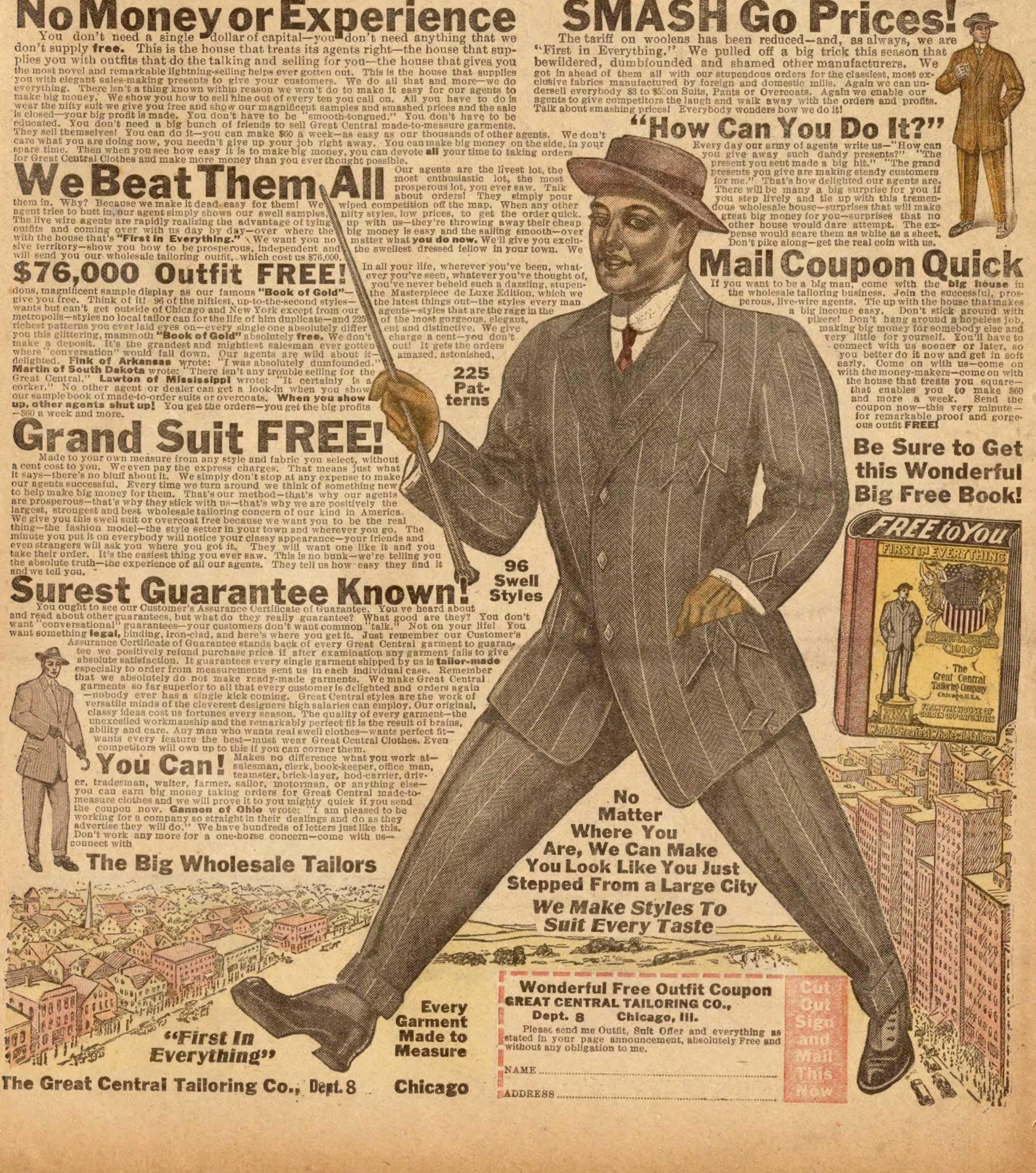
"How Can You Do It?"

Every day our army of agents write us—"How can you give away such dandy presents?" "The present you sent made a big hit." "The grand presents you give are making steady customers for me." That's how delighted our agents are. There will be many a big surprise for you if you step lively and tie up with this tremendous wholesale house—surprises that will make great big money for you—surprises that no other house would dare attempt. The expense would scare them as white as a sheet. Don't pike along—get the real coin with us.

Mail Coupon Quick

If you want to be a big man, come with the **big house** in the wholesale tailoring business. Join the successful, prosperous, live-wire agents. Tie up with the house that makes a big income easy. Don't stick around with pikers! Don't hang around a hopeless job, making big money for somebody else and very little for yourself. You'll have to connect with us sooner or later, so you better do it now and get in soft early. Come on with us—come on with the money-makers—come on with the house that treats you square—that enables you to make $60 and more a week. Send the coupon now—this very minute—for remarkable proof and gorgeous outfit **FREE!**

Be Sure to Get this Wonderful Big Free Book!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Please send me Outfit, Suit Offer and everything as stated in your page announcement, absolutely Free and without any obligation to me.

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